

Soviet Literature

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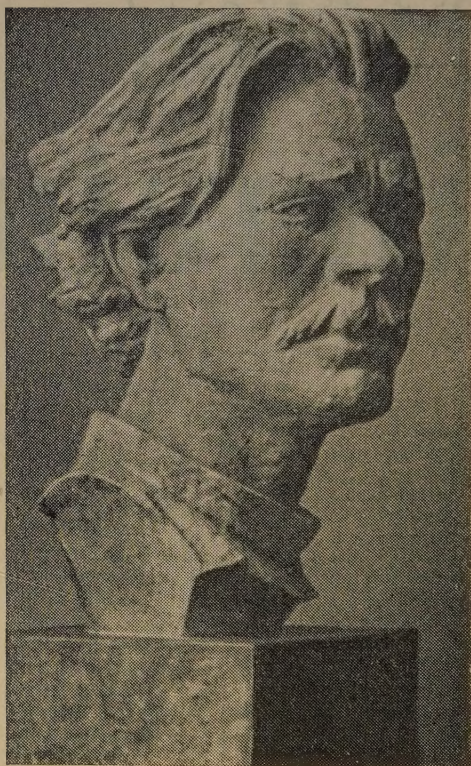
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*Bust of Maxim Gorky. Sculpture by
Vera Mukhina*

MAXIM GORKY

MISHA

Misha was a boy who could never sit still, and whenever he was not allowed to go outside to play, he whirled around all day long like a spinningtop, always getting in the way of the grownups.

All boys and girls know that grownups are always frightfully busy with some dull thing or other, and that is why they so often tell children:

"Don't bother me!"

Now Misha heard these words very often from both his mother, who always seemed busy, and his father who spent days in his

study, writing all sorts of books, very long ones, and, most probably, dull—Misha was not allowed to read these books.

Mother was nice, just like a little doll, and so was father, though he was more like a Red Indian than a doll.

Just before spring, when the weather grew nasty with sleet and snow falling every day, and Misha was obliged to stay indoors and became a bigger nuisance than ever, his father and mother, father asked him one day:

"Misha. Do you feel very bored?"

"Like a lesson in arithmetics!" was the reply.

"Well, take this notebook and write down everything interesting that happens to you. Understand? That's what's called a diary. So you will be keeping a diary!"

Misha took the notebook and asked:

"And what interesting things will happen?"

"Oh! I don't know!" said his father, lighting a cigarette.

"And why don't you know?"

"Because as a little boy I did my lessons badly and always annoyed people with silly questions, and never did any thinking for myself. See? Now run along!"

Misha guessed that dad was hinting at him and did not want to talk to him; he wanted to sulk, but then his father's eyes were kind. So he merely asked:

"And who will do the interesting things?"

"You yourself," replied father. "Now, off you go like a good boy, and don't disturb me."

Misha went to his own room, put the open notebook on the desk, and, after thinking for a few minutes, wrote on the first page:

"This is a diary."

"Daddy gave me this nice book. If I write in it everything I want to, it will be interesting."

He put down the pen, sat quiet for a while, letting his eyes roam around the room—all the things in it were so familiar.

He got up and went to see his father. Father was not at all pleased at his intrusion.

"Oh, it's you again."

"Look," said Misha, holding out his notebook, "see what I've written already. Am I doing it right?"

"Yes, yes, yes," answered his father hurriedly. "Only 'diary' is spelled with an 'a' and 'write' with a 'w'. Now, go away, please!"

"And what else should I write in it?" asked Misha after a moment's thought.

"Anything you like! Think of something and write—write poems!"

"Poems? But which ones?"

"Not which ones—make them up yourself! And run away, you nuisance!"

Father took him by the hand, led him outside and shut the door. This was contrary to all the rules of politeness, and Misha really felt hurt this time. Returning to his room, he again sat down at the desk, opened the notebook and began to think: what else could he add? He was bored. . . His mother was busy checking linen in the dining room; he was not allowed to go into the kitchen which was always a very interesting place, and there was sleet and fog in the street. . .

Misha glanced at the clock. It was still early, a quarter past nine, but as he looked at the clock an idea occurred to him and with a smile on his face he turned back to the notebook and wrote:

"There is a clock on our wall,

Its hands, like whiskers, rise and fall."

This was real poetry, and delighted by the results of his effort, Misha leaped from his seat and ran towards the dining room, shouting:

"Mum, mum, I've made a poem; look at it!"

"Nine," said his mother, sorting the napkins. "Don't disturb me. Ten, eleven. . ."

Misha put one hand around her neck and with the other hand pushed the notebook up to her nose.

"But mother! Please, do look. . ."

"Twelve. . . Oh, Lord! You'll knock me off my feet. . ."

But she took the notebook, read the verse and upset Misha by saying:

"Oh, your father must have helped you; besides, 'wall' is spelled with an 'a' and a 'double el'."

"In poetry too?" asked Misha quite crestfallen.

"Yes, yes, in poetry too, don't worry me, please; run away and do something."

"But what?"

"Go and write some more poetry."

"What'll I write next?"

"Think out something. Say, the little clock ticks away . . . or something like that and you'll have a poem."

"Alright," said Misha and obediently went back to his room. There he wrote down his mother's words:

"The little clock ticks away," but stopped there unable to think of anything else no matter how he tried, and even smeared the ink over his chin, to say nothing of his fingers.

And suddenly, as if prompted by someone, he thought out the fourth line:

"But I am bored all the day!"

It was true. Misha was very bored, but when he wrote down the fourth line he was ready to jump for joy.

He jumped up and ran to father, but father was cunning! He had locked the door of his study. Misha knocked.

"Who's that?" his father asked.

"Open quickly!" cried Misha breathlessly. "It's me. I've written a poem and a jolly good one."

"Congratulations, write some more," his father mumbled.

"But I want to read it to you!"

"You can read it later. . ."

"But I want to do it now!"

"Misha, that's enough!"

Misha bent down to the keyhole and read the verse, but it was like shouting down into a well—his father made no reply.

Deeply hurt, Misha quietly went back to his room, stood near the window for a while, pressing his forehead to the cold glass, and then sat down at the desk and began to write down his thoughts:

"Father cheated me. He said if I wrote a diary it would be interesting—it's no use! He simply did it to keep me out of his way. I know that. When mother gets angry, he calls her a sulking hen, but he is no better. Yesterday when I was playing ninepins with his silver cigarette case, he flew into a rage worse than mother. And he needn't talk. They're both the same. When Nina Petrovna, the one who sings, broke a cup, they said: that's nothing, never mind, but when I break something I never hear the end of it."

At the thought of how unjustly he was being treated by father and mother, Misha nearly burst into tears of pity for himself

and for his parents; they were both so nice and yet could not treat him properly.

He rose and walked over to the window; perched on the cornice, a wet sparrow was preening its feathers. Misha watched the little bird as with its yellow beak it was smoothing the dark brown feathers, which near the beak bristled just like daddy's whiskers.

And Misha found himself thinking in verse:

"With legs like toothpicks,
And beady eyes, this bird
Has whiskers like daddy's
Upon my word."

His thoughts no longer ran in rhyme, but that was quite enough. Misha felt his heart swell with pride; he rushed towards the desk, recorded the lines, and added:

"Writing poems is quite easy. All you have to do is to look at something, and that is all, and the rhyme comes all by itself. Father needn't show off . . . I could write books myself if I wanted and in rhyme, too. I'll just learn how to spell and put in dots and commas, and then go ahead. Mother, other, butter, shutter. I could make up a poem with these words, but I don't want to. I just won't write any poems, and I won't keep the diary. If you are not interested, neither am I. And, please, don't bother me."

Misha was so sad that he nearly cried, but just then his governess, Xenia Ivanovna, came in, a small creature, with rosy cheeks and shining drops of rain on her eyebrows.

"Good morning," she said. "And why are you sulking?"

Misha frowned with an air of self-importance:

"Don't disturb me!" he said huskily, imitating his father's voice, and then wrote down in his notebook:

"Daddy calls my governess little pugnose and says that she ought to be still playing with dolls."

"Now, what's the matter with you?" the governess asked wonderingly, rubbing her rosy cheeks with her doll-like hands. "What are you writing?"

"Mustn't say," replied Misha. "Daddy told me to keep a diary and write down all my interesting thoughts. Write about everything."

"And have you thought of anything interesting?" asked the governess, bending over the notebook.

"Nothing yet, only poetry," said Misha.

"And the mistakes, look at all these mistakes!" the governess exclaimed. "It is poetry. But your father must have written it, not you. . . ."

Misha was again offended: what was this? No one believed him! And he snapped back:

"If that's so, I won't do my lessons!"

"But why?"

"Because I won't, and that's all!"

Just then the governess' glance fell on what Misha had written about her. She flushed crimson, turned to look in the mirror and also took offense: "So you wrote about me too! Is it true? Is that what your father says about me?"

"You think he's afraid of you?" Misha asked.

The governess grew thoughtful again, turned once more to the mirror and then said:

"So you don't want to do your lessons?"

"No."

"Alright. I'll go and hear what your mother has to say about it."

She went away.

Misha's glance followed her out of the door, and then he turned back to his writing:

"I snapped at Xenia Ivanovna, just like mother at daddy. She can stop bothering and disturbing me. If no one likes me, then don't care. Later I will say I'm sorry to my governess and write it down in my notebook too. I will write all day long, just like daddy, and no one will see me. And I won't eat my dinner, never, not even when there is a baked apple. And I won't even sleep at night, just keep on writing and writing, and let mother tell me in the morning as she does to dad that I'll kill myself, and my nerves will go to pieces. And let her cry. I don't care! If nobody likes me, it won't matter."

He had barely finished writing, when in walked his mother with Xenia Ivanovna; his mother silently picked up the notebook, and, her kind eyes brightening into a smile, began to read Misha's thoughts.

"Good heavens," she exclaimed in wonder.

"What a . . . No, I must show this to father!"

And she went off with the notebook in her hand.

"I'll probably be punished!" thought Misha and then turning to his governess, asked: "So you told on me?"

"If you disobey. . . ."

"I'm not a horse that has to obey. . . ."

"Misha!" cried his governess, but Misha continued angrily:

"I can't do my lessons and think about everything and write down everything at the same time. . . ."

He could have said much more, but the maid came in saying that daddy wanted to see him.

"Now, listen, old man," his father began, pressing down his bristling whiskers with one hand, and holding Misha's notebook in the other, "come here, please!"

Daddy's eyes twinkled merrily, and mother lay on the couch, her head buried in a heap of small cushions, her shoulders shaking as if she were laughing.

"They won't punish me," Misha guessed.

Daddy stood Misha in front of him, pressed between his knees, and lifting Misha's chin with his finger, asked:

"You are being naughty, aren't you?"

"Yes," Misha confessed.

"And why?"

"Just because."

"All the same—why?"

"I don't know," said Misha, after considering this question. "You pay no attention to me, neither does mum, and my governess. . . she pesters me instead."

"You felt offended?" asked daddy quietly.

"Yes, of course, I was offended. . . ."

"You mustn't be offended," his father advised in a friendly tone. "I did not mean to offend you, and neither did mother—see her laughing quietly there on the couch



Gorky on the Volga

By Victor Tsyplakov

I'm amused too, but I'll do my laughing later. . . ."

"And why is it funny?" asked Misha.

"I'll tell you why, only later."

"But why?" insisted Misha.

"You see, you are such a funny little boy!"

"Am I?" asked Misha incredulously.

Father lifted him onto his knee, and tickling him gently behind the ear, said:

"Now let's talk seriously, all right?"

"All right," agreed Misha and frowned.

"No one meant to hurt you, it's the bad weather hurting you. You see? If we had fine weather, sunshine, spring, you would be playing outside, and everything would be fine! And in your diary you wrote a lot of nonsense. . . ."

"You told me to," said Misha, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, son, I didn't ask you to write nonsense!"

"Perhaps, you didn't," agreed Misha. "I don't remember now. And did I really write nonsense?"

"Yes, old man!" his dad said, shaking his head.

"And when you write, does it come out nonsense, too?" asked Misha.

Mother leaped from the couch and ran as if she remembered she had left the coffee pot on the stove, and even the noise she made was like coffee boiling over. Misha realized that she was laughing, but did not want to show it.

These grownups are pretty good at pretending.

Father also felt like laughing; he puffed his cheeks up, twitched his moustache and made some snorting noises with his nose.

"When I write," he said, "it also comes out nonsense sometimes. It is very hard to write and make everything good and truthful. Your poem isn't bad, but all the rest is no good!"

"Why?" asked Misha.

"It's much too cross. I did not know I had such a critic in you, you criticize everybody. You must begin with yourself, first give yourself a good dose of criticism. But better let's give it up altogether, let's stop keeping the diary."

Ornamenting father's paper with red and blue pencil marks, Misha said:

"Let's give it up, because it is just as boring as lessons. Only you invented it yourself—you said: write, it will be interesting. I began to write and nothing happened. But listen, may I not do my lessons today?"

"Why?" asked father.

"I'd rather read with Xenia Ivanovna."

"You needn't do your lessons today," agreed father cheerfully. "Only we must both apologize to your governess, because what we said and wrote about her is not . . . nice!"

Father rose, took Misha by the hand, and on the way to his room, said quietly:

"It's true, of course, that she has a slight pugnose, but it's best not to remind her of it. It can't be straightened with words, son. A nose, whatever its shape, is given for life. For instance you have freckles over your nose and your whole funny face—would you like me to call you Freckles?"

"No," agreed Misha.

And that was the happy end of the story about Misha's diary.

Translated by Lia Gavurina

ALEXANDER SEREBROV

MY REMINISCENCES ABOUT GORKY

For over thirty years, Alexander Tikhonov, a distinguished Russian man of letters who wrote under the pseudonym A. Serebrov, was an intimate friend and collaborator of Maxim Gorky. "You and I have collaborated for a quarter of a century," Gorky wrote to Tikhonov in 1925. "Permit me to say that of all the people with a zest and capacity for work, you are among the best, the rarest. This is said in all seriousness and sincerity—consciously and with deep feeling."

Indeed, it would be difficult to name a single Russian publication which included Gorky among its contributors where Tikhonov did not work as editor. The two friends collaborated on the *Molodaya Rossiya* (Young Russia), a student magazine published by the Bolshevik Party in 1905; on the *Proletarskiye Pisateli* (Proletarian Writers) Symposium (1913—1914); the magazine *Letopis* (Annals); the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life) and in the *Parus* (The Sail) Publishing House (1916—1917).

This association continued after the October Revolution when Tikhonov participated in such ambitious publishing ventures of Gorky's as *Vsemirnaya Literatura* (World Literature), *Istoria Fabrik i Zavodov* (History of Factories and Mills), *Zhizn Zamechatelnykh Lyudei* (Lives of Distinguished People) and *Istoricheskiye Romany* (Historical Novels).

Just now Tikhonov is putting the finishing touches to volume one of a book of memoirs. In this volume Tikhonov records reminiscences of outstanding people, writers, artists, etc., of the early 20th century whom he numbered among his personal friends.

A prominent place in the book is occupied by Gorky, reminiscences of whom occur throughout the book.

Below we publish three chapters of these memoirs: the first one relates of Tikhonov's early meetings with Gorky (in 1899) while the rest belong to the year 1902.

I

NEVSKY SUBURB

When I told Nikita Sergeyevich that Gorky had arrived in Petersburg he was so excited by the news that for a while his sight failed him.

Nikita Sergeyevich was sorely troubled with his eyes. Forty-five years of cotton dust in a weaving mill had made themselves felt. Whenever he was overcome by some powerful emotion his eyes were affected.

When the spasm had passed, Nikita Sergeyevich made his niece Olga sit down and write a letter to Gorky.

"Now take a sheet of good paper and write clearly, none of that spider scrawl of yours!" he cried tapping with his horny nail on the table.

"Write! Well, dear Alexei Maximovich¹, Nikita Rubtsov, the old tramp, greets you... No, cut out the bit about the old tramp... He'd like to know if you are the same chap he knew years ago down in Kazan. And if so, would you drop him a line for the sake of old times... That's all! Let him guess the rest himself."

Leaving his niece to write the letter, Nikita Sergeyevich turned eagerly to me.

"Why of course it's him! Don't I know him? Certainly I do. Peshkov? Alexei Peshkov,

the baker! Why, we were old pals! And look at him now! That's destiny for you, eh? Would you ever believe a working man could do it? A writer! Well, I'm darned! It's true he was a brainy bird... And a flair for politics... Oh yes, he was very keen on politics, he was. He used to go for our factory lads good and proper, he did..."

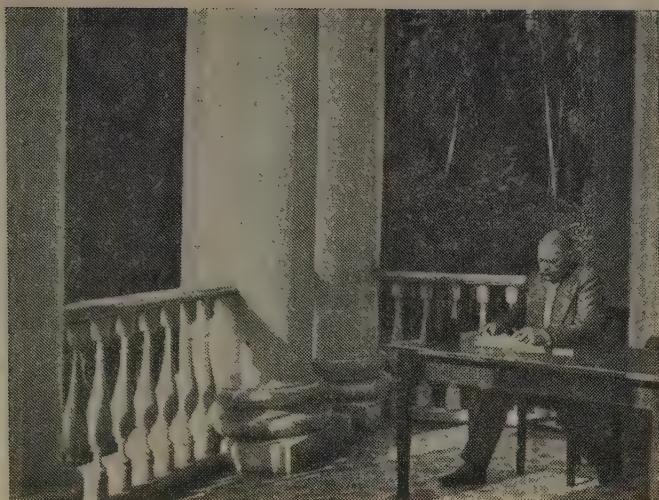
Nikita Sergeyevich was over seventy but he was sturdy for his age. He was quite bald except for a greyish tuft at the back. His face was clean-shaven and his clipped moustache was as stiff as a toothbrush. He wore dark-blue spectacles which made him look exactly like a German druggist. He had a pension and was spending his declining years in the home of his sister, Anna Sergeyevna, and her daughter Olga, beyond the Nevsky suburb.

Anna Sergeyevna was a widow still in her prime. Dressmaking was her profession, but matchmaking her vocation.

Olga had her mother's Russian comeliness but little of her character. Anna Sergeyevna was an inveterate chatterbox. Olga, on the other hand, was a modest girl, her quiet demeanour enhanced by the calm, clear depths of her large grey eyes, thick lashes gave them at times an expression of maidenly melancholy. She was twenty, a medical student and has dedicated herself to the revolution.

Our circle which met in their apartment every Saturday was conducted by Comrade Platon, a lean, middle-aged locomotive driver with a black shiny moustache.

¹ The real name of Maxim Gorky is Alexei Maximovich Peshkov.



Gorky at home. Photo
by R. Karmen

When Gorky replied to Nikita Sergeyevich's letter promising to call on him, there commenced in the Rubtsov household such scrubbing and baking as occur only at Easter.

Anna Sergeyevna, assisted by Valya, the pretty little seamstress, was busy in the kitchen for days on end. Nikita Sergeyevich fussed more than anyone else, shouting at everybody and being heeded by none. Platon went to town to do the necessary shopping. Olga and I set about putting the house in order. The parlour was clean but empty and unheated. We hauled the dining table in from the kitchen, borrowed chairs from the neighbours, patched up the frayed wallpaper, hung net curtains at the windows and portraits of writers on the walls. The result was quite cosy as long as you did not look out of the window. The view was compounded of boards, stone and scrap iron. In the foreground behind the rain-soaked vegetable patch rose a mouldy wooden fence fringed with a formidable array of rusty nails with the points sticking upward; beyond was a heap of rubble and factory refuse; further on, a cemetery and a swamp surrounded by barbed wire, no doubt to prevent the corpses from trying to escape the dampness; on the horizon reared the box-like factory buildings with broken windows and chimneys putting starkly out; over all a bleak sky daubed with black smoke. And not a tree in case the working man felt tempted to hang himself!

Besides myself, only three members of the circle—Platon, Yakov and Lisa—knew of the coming event. There was not enough room around the table for the others, especially since Anna Sergeyevna had insisted on inviting Valya, the seamstress, and, of course, the accordionist who played for weddings, nicknamed Capoule because of his stylish haircut.

There was an embarrassing moment when the two old friends met. On hearing Gorky's voice in the hall, Nikita Sergeyevich rushed forward to meet him but halted suddenly, on his tracks, clawing at the air as though about to play a game of blind man's buff.

At first Gorky did not understand what was wrong, and he too paused in bewilderment.

"He has trouble with his eyes," explained Anna Sergeyevna, bowing to the guest from the waist as to a bridegroom.

Gorky hurried over to Nikita Sergeyevich and in his confusion shouted in his ear although there was nothing wrong with the old man's hearing.

"How are you, old pal! It's me . . . Maximych!"

Nikita Sergeyevich, looking small and frail beside the tall Gorky, pressed his dark spectacles against Gorky's chest and wept.

"You didn't forget! Ah, brother . . . I'm not what I was. . . ."

Gorky embraced him heartily and also wept a little.

"Come, Uncle, let me put some drops into your eyes," said Olga in a firm professional tone, leading the old man from the room.

The table was so loaded with food and drink that it looked like the magic tablecloth of the fairy tale. Clouds of steam rising from the gleaming samovar that stood near the ikons made the coloured lamps hanging before them swim like celestial bodies among real clouds.

"Has he been this way for long?" asked Gorky drying his eyes with his handkerchief.

"Don't worry, it will soon pass," Platon assured him.

"A professional disease of the proletariat," Yakov hastened to add.

Gorky shook hands all round.

"Are these folk your relatives?" he asked Anna Sergeyevna as he took his seat in the place of honour at the table.

"Oh no!" the hostess disclaimed hastily. "These are Olga's Marxists," she added, not without pride.

Gorky cast his eyes over the assembly, taking special note of Platon.

"Anna Sergeyevna will have her little joke. What kind of Marxists are we! We just amuse ourselves occasionally with a book or two for want of something better to do," said Platon with affected modesty.

"And what do you read, may I ask?"

"Oh, anything we can pick up... Economics... A smattering of philosophy... We read your books too..."

"Like them?" Gorky fired the question at Platon, hoping to embarrass him and force him to drop the formal tone.

"Well, how shall I put it without giving offense," Platon replied slowly, stroking his whiskers. "You write well, of course, but frankly, I don't think your choice of subject is the correct one."

"What makes you think that?"

"Shall we put it this way? I think you will agree that each class ought to have its own literature. There's Turgenev or Gleb Uspensky, of course, and then there's Leskov and the others for the clergy. Now you, as far as I know, are a working man, one of ourselves, in other words. And yet you ignore us. That's a great pity. You write about all sorts of tramps and drunkards. What is there interesting about them? A lot of froth and nothing more."

Platon's frankness surprised me. But Gorky appeared to like it.

"Now why don't you write about us, about the working class? That would be much more to the point."

"I'm afraid I don't know enough about the subject," said Gorky apologetically.

"More's the pity. We do not know ourselves properly. And that's why we have made such a mess of things."

"Do you mean to say you have not reached an understanding yet?" asked Gorky stressing the word "yet".

Platon gave him a searching look.

"You ought to know more about that than I," he said significantly.

"I thought that after Minsk..." Gorky began, but Platon cut him short.

"Minsk is not the only city!"

Gorky looked abashed; he had evidently said more than he should.

I felt myself in the presence of an important political secret but I was at a loss to understand what was meant. We knew nothing of the Minsk Congress of the Social Democrats at that time.

"What I mean to say is that we have no literature of our own," Platon continued getting over the awkward pause. "We are obliged to beg from others."

"Why go to your neighbour's yard for your own property?" Gorky demanded.

"That's exactly what I'm saying! That's where you come in, we want you to help us."

And for the first time that evening Platon relaxed and began to speak in an easy, friendly fashion.

"Forgive me, Alexei Maximovich, for standing on ceremony with you. One has to be polite to strangers, you know."

At that point Nikita Sergeyevich burst into the room.

"Here I am, repaired and ready for action!" he exclaimed, rushing over to embrace Gorky once more. "Let's have a look at you. Let's see what you look like as a writer. Why, you haven't changed a bit, except that the moustache is a bit neater. Now then, woman, what are you doing sitting there like a dummy? Attend to our dear guest!"

"Platon Mikhailovich has monopolized him," replied Anna Sergeyevna jealously from behind the samovar.

"Ah, my friend Alexei Maximovich," the old man intoned, "see what tricks life plays. Eh? Look at the splendid youngsters growing up all around us. You ought to see the books we read nowadays. Such wisdom! Mother Russia is ablaze and there's nothing that can extinguish the flame! Remember how we used to hang round the taverns swilling vodka and grumbling... That reminds me, it's time to celebrate our reunion! Fill up the glasses, Anna!"

We all rose and clinked glasses with Gorky.

I glanced at him and was amazed at the transformation that had come over him. Gone was the Gorky I had seen at an intellectual gathering so recently. There he had deliberately antagonized people by his brusque almost churlish manner; here he seemed to reach out to them with an apologetic smile and a gentle look in his blue eyes. Here, among his own people, he was in his element.

The clatter of plates and knives did not interfere with the conversation. Gorky asked lots of questions but said little himself. His swiftly growing admiration for Platon was touching to watch.

"How well you told that story! Splendid I mean it!" he cried, enchanted by something the engine driver had said. "That about the strike is very good. And about every locomotive having its own caprice, and an engine being like the party: hauls uphill and applies the brake at inclines. An admirable remark. You're quite right, one ought to write about all this. Have you never tried? You ought to, really... Oh no, I couldn't do it as well as you, and besides I have devilishly little time... Cultured life keeps you confoundedly busy. It's awful. People—al day long, people. Sometimes, you know, I feel as if I'd like to get away from it all and live on a desert island... But about the workers I shall write. You'll see... A hundred horsepower play. I promise."

Food and drink were consumed in abundance. Valya, the seamstress, was kept busily changing plates. The pelmeny¹ were a huge success. Gorky tasted them and snapped his fingers in delight.

"My dear hostess, you have slain me. In my foolish pride I imagined that no one could turn out better pelmeny than myself. These aren't pelmeny, they're pearls of creation."

The ball of conversation was tossed back and forth. Gorky was bombarded with all kinds of questions. Anna Sergeyevna talked about pelmeny, Yakov wanted to know how to become a writer. Platon was interested in Bervi-Flerovsky's book.² Nikita Sergeyevich was anxious to exchange reminiscences. And even the silent Olga had one question to ask Gorky, but it was a question that caused all conversation to cease.

"Do you believe in Socialism?" she asked

¹ Siberian meat dumplings

² A Russian economist

Gorky gazed into her large, grey eyes and smiled:

"You do have an uncanny way of asking about it!"

After the fifth glass Platon lured the guest away into a corner for a private conversation.

"So, there's hope?" I heard Platon inquire joyfully as they rejoined the gathering.

"Not the slightest doubt," Gorky replied.

They nudged one another gleefully for a long while. One could see that they wanted to hug each other but both were too shy.

"What about another little drink?" called Nikita Sergeyevich now slightly tipsy and in his blindness spilling the vodka over the side of the glasses.

We had another drink. Gorky swallowed his neatly, with a certain carelessness in fact; he did not throw back his head or make faces as Platon did, nor did he protest coyly as the women did.

Anna Sergeyevna alone of the women was a match for him; he willingly clinked glasses with her and was already addressing her as Kuma.¹

When it was time for tea the hostess made a sign to the accordionist. Although he had sat at table all evening, he did not seem to be there. His hairdresser's face expressed nothing but disdainful indifference.

Now he moved back from the table, set his accordion on his knee, ran up and down a scale and crashed into a polka.

Anna Sergeyevna dragged Gorky out into the middle of the floor and began to twirl him around her, with her arm about his waist.

"But I can't dance! I'll tread on your toes!" he protested, trying to withdraw from her embrace.

In the end he succumbed, and with his right arm encircled Anna Sergeyevna's ample waist, and with his eyes fixed on his feet as though he actually feared to harm his partner's fancy shoes, he commenced to cut ridiculous capers. He was clowning.

Olga danced with Platon. Her grey eyes met his, darkened and were obscured instantly by her lashes. Platon tapped with his booted feet and held his partner stiffly at arm's length as though she were a boiling samovar. Lisa dragged the tipsy Yakov over the floor. The scent of cheap eau-de-cologne and singed curls was wafted to my nostrils from the pretty seamstress Valya each time we swung around in the dance.

Only two remained seated at the table. Capoule, his ear laid lovingly against his instrument, was wallowing in polka variations. Nikita Sergeyevich, his blue spectacles pushed up on his forehead, was experiencing as much bliss as his aged face with the watery eyes could express.

Gorky makes no mention of this evening in his autobiographical writings, even when he speaks with much affection of his Kazan comrade Nikita Rubtsov.

Nevertheless there is much of Platon and Olga in Nil and Polly from his play

Philistines, at least so he told us subsequently.

II

MAN

One evening at the home of Maria Andreyeva, an actress of the Art Theatre, Gorky read his poem *Man*. In the first version the poem ended with a postscript which has been preserved only in the manuscript. This is in my possession and has never been published. "Here you have my song," wrote Gorky, addressing Maria Andreyeva. "Its loud, crude words conceal my soul's most cherished dream, the only faith I have, the faith that gives and will continue to give me the strength to live. I have experienced a great deal. Often death has stared me in the face and I have felt its chill breath on my cheek and I sought to smite my heart with the icy touch of horror, but Death could not kill my dream."

"More than once Madness spread its fiery wings imperiously over my head and I felt the searing flame beneath my skull, but it too did not destroy my dream."

"And oft I heard the malevolent laughter of the Devil mocking at the ashes of youth's visions, but even the sharp sword of doubt did not slay my dream, for it had become embedded in my heart."

Leonid Andreyev, Skitalets and Ivan Bunin¹ listened to the poem each in his own way: the dashing, handsome Andreyev in his equally handsome blouse inhaled and exhaled the poem along with his cigarette smoke; angular, rough-hewn Skitalets boomed "That's the stuff!"; wiry, cypress-like Bunin fingered his beard. Bunin was the first to break the silence, but he did not speak of the poem itself, instead, he asked how and when Gorky had first conceived the idea of *Man*.

Gorky did not reply at once. He folded the manuscript and thrust it into his trousers pocket. He lit a cigarette and flicked the ash in the ashtray.

"When you talk or write about yourself you're bound to make a hash of it," he said stroking his moustache. "I have noticed it many times in my own case—you set down everything faithfully as it happened and you find that the result is—literature. Has it never happened to you?" he asked Bunin. "Ah! It has. Then you know what I mean. There must be some peculiar law of selection at work. It is impossible to experience the same thing twice. The mind intervenes and shuffles the cards. . . It is very difficult for me to tell you about *Man*. Were I a musician I might play it for you, but it is difficult to put it into words. . . But, if you insist, I can try."

Gorky paused again, his eyes fixed on a dark corner of the room as though his memory were there.

"I was tramping the country at the time. Roaming . . . in search of my lost soul. . . A revolting occupation, like searching the floor for a lost button. A simple thing a

¹ Literally—godmother, usually means "friend"

¹ Well-known Russian writers of the beginning of the 20th century

button, yet without it you are liable to lose your trousers. And trousers, as you know, are essentially the foundation of human culture. . . . No, don't laugh! Remember what the Bible has to say on this score! The first thing Adam did was to stick his legs into a pair of trousers to hide man's shame. And what is the meaning of our culture if not to hide man's shame. So there you are! You ought to read the Bible. . . . Yes, the Bible!"

Gorky puffed at his cigarette and stared into the darkness.

"I was alone on the steppes. . . . It was sultry weather, I had covered at least twenty miles that day. By evening I was dead beat. I had no desire to spend the night in a village. . . . I was at loggerheads with my fellow-men at the time. I was a bit weary of people with their feeble whinings like mosquitoes buzzing in the darkness but afraid to bite. . . . A miserable sort of animal, man, I felt. Have you observed, Ivan Alexeyevich,¹ that the rarer the species, the bigger they are. Look at the elephant! Now if elephants were to multiply like mosquitoes and fly about in the air can you imagine how interesting life would become. Picture Semipalov, the merchant, on his way to church with his spouse. . . . The essence of respectability and decorum. . . . The bells are pealing, the pigs grunting. The sun is shining. And suddenly, if you please, a mosquito weighing two tons prods the merchant in the back of the neck with its trunk. . . . Before the wife has time to scream all that is left of the merchant is his long-tailed coat and his church medal on its ribbon! I imagine that under such circumstances ordinary mortals too would possess greater magnitude. . . . But to continue. . . . I didn't go to the village for the night. Instead I found a dry willow in a gully, lit a fire and relaxed. When you are tired, and hungry to boot, your body seems to lose weight and there is a monotonous buzzing in your head, like the hum in a telegraph pole. And it seems as if the humming were emanating from afar, from some boundless distance . . . from interplanetary space, perhaps.

"This is just the state of mind for versifying. . . . (To Bunin): Have you not found it so? To this day I cannot get rid of the rhyming habit, but in those days it was practically an obsession. Well, as I lay there by the fire warming my empty belly I felt the urge coming upon me. Alexander Nikolaevich here (That's me. A.S.) has just told us how the Kirghiz sing their songs on the plains. They sing of the things they see about them: 'The sun shines . . . the camel plods along . . . I am thirsty' Well, it was the same with me. It began as a sort of irritation of the brain and then the words came pouring out: night . . . the steppe . . . fire . . . and by the fire, a man. . . . And what else? Oh, stars, of course. And what are stars? A poetical question! I began matching words, weighing them, estimating their value. . . . You know, of course, that every word has its specific weight. Some are heavy, others light. . . . Our philologists ought to study

that question: the affinity between the phonetics of words and their meaning, eh? They might arrive at some very interesting conclusions. So I weighed them: night . . . fire. . . . Light, winged words. . . . Earth? A heavy, sticky sort of word. . . . Stars? A prickly word. . . . Man? Now, that was a word, a most profound, weighty word. . . . Man! Chelovek¹. Do you see what I mean? Chelovek—head—life. . . . And you know, something seemed to burn within me. . . . As if I had shot myself again. . . . I remember actually leaping to my feet with excitement. . . . I gazed at the sky, the stars . . . steppe. . . . Nature! Wait now, I said to myself, what meaning has all this without man? None. Hence, it is all for him, for man? Yes, that must be it. . . . I sat down again and thought. M-yes! And so ever since I have adhered to this view. . . ."

Gorky drummed his fingers on the table beating out a rhythmic march.

"Well, do you get the point?" he inquired, tapping out the final beat.

"Why don't you write about it?" said Bunin out of politeness.

"I can't," Gorky replied dully, sensing that Bunin wasn't impressed by his story. "My writing is still crude . . . very crude. Like the band of a fire brigade . . . with a great big drum!"

III

FAM

Outsiders were not usually permitted to attend rehearsals at the Art Theatre, but I wasn't altogether an outsider: I had collaborated during the theatre's performance in St. Petersburg, and besides, had I not an invitation from the playwright himself?

They were rehearsing the fourth act of *Low Depths*. The hall was in semi-darkness, the light coming only from the stage. From behind the producer's table rose the silhouette of Nemirovich-Danchenko, Simov, the artist Savva Morozov and the back view of several other bearded individuals. Gorky and I sat in the twelfth row. He had declined the invitation to sit with the producers.

"They'll look at me as if I were a barometer," he said, "and I'm standing a 'change' just now."

"Change" was the word for it: he now smiled, now frowned, now glanced over toward the lamp indicating the exit. After the Actor's monologue he bent his head to wipe away a furtive tear.

The play ended, Nemirovich-Danchenko clapped his hands to signify "Curtain". But the curtain did not drop. The players stepped over the footlights into the stalls and at once ceased to be the characters they had just been impersonating on the stage. Their faces were all familiar: Stanislavsky, Kachalov, Moskvina, Knipper. It was not pleasant

¹ Chelovek, the Russian for "man" is composed of two old Russian words: *chelo* meaning the upper part of the head and *vek* meaning the human life.

¹ Bunin

see them clothed in tatters, their faces smudged with grease. Their voices and gestures no longer suited their appearance. Nemirovich-Danchenko walked over to the author.

"Well, how did you like it today?"

Gorky, his eyes lowered, twirled his moustache.

"Splendid... very good... May one smoke here?"

"Have you any commands or injunctions?" Nemirovich-Danchenko was joking, parodying *The Inspector General*.

Gorky responded in similar vein.

"Dear me, no! You are in charge here."

"Come now!"

"I have already said that I like it very much... Only, don't you think it's a trifle gloomy. Chekhov has written me that now everyone will regard me as a pessimist... But am I really a pessimist? What is it all about, frankly speaking? Here you have people living in a dachshouse under unspeakable conditions, but they are human beings for all that. The rags and tatters don't matter. You can see a man better through his rags than, for instance, through a uniform or dress suit. And it's not pity, not compassion, not respect and awe, yes awe, that these people ought to command from that... that damned public of yours... Suppose they were to come here and say: now then, give us a place too, we're no worse than you! You see, that's it! But as you present it... there's a faint suggestion of charity... a crumb from the rich man's table... Take Stalin, for example. Constantine Sergeyevich¹ gets the part well, splendidly in fact, but that bit about Man is just a trifle uncertain. It's a bit too abstract. Within two or three hundred years, perhaps, in the Chekhov manner... But Man, after all, is here, isn't it, present in each one of us. The wellspring! Without that stuff in him man is no better than a beast. You know, I would not be ashamed to present him to the public straight from the shoulder, as it were, like a proclamation. Let Man's voice ring out... It can't be natural, you think? To hell with naturalism, then! Let Boborykin² bother about that... Incidentally, there is a resemblance between the two: they are both old, toothless and bespectacled..."

Gorky noticed that the actors had drawn nearer and were listening intently.

"But never mind. I daresay you know better."

Then he turned to the actors.

"I thank you again... very much... I love you!"

Bowing on all sides Gorky moved towards the door, to where the lamp marked the exit.

* * *

"I should have told them something about Luka as well," Gorky said as we walked together down the street. "It's a bit awkward for me to speak, though. It looks as if I were

trying to teach them. Luka is a caricature of Karatayev. Curious that no one seems to have noticed that. They even speak the same language. A mean character that Luka, in my opinion. But Moskin makes him too much of a holy man, a Tikhon Zadonsky. That's not quite what he was. A sort of Francis of Assisi... from Voronezh... One could write a good piece on that. Dostoyevsky tried it in the *Karamazovs*. But he didn't succeed. Fyodor Mikhailovich had overdone it that time. But Tikhon was as simple as a brook in the glen."

At the street corner, a lanky, shabbily dressed individual wearing galoshes on his bare feet and a thin mackintosh, although it was quite cold, emerged from a beer saloon. He made a sweeping gesture with his derelict hat and blocked our path.

"Quelque chose for a proletarian intellectual... down and out! 'Brother mine, oh suffering brother,'¹ he declaimed exactly like the Actor at the rehearsal we had just quitted.

Gorky thrust a bill into his hand.

"Merci," said the tramp, then looking closer he recognized Gorky and yelled at the top of his voice:

"Maxim Gorky, by Jove! Bravo! Bravo, Maxim!"

Gorky seized him by the collar.

"Stop it, damn you!"

But it was too late: passers-by had heard and passed on the word to others until Gorky's name went echoing down the street.

A curious thing happened. People had been going about their business in the usual fashion, some chatting with their neighbours, others mumbling to themselves, some hurrying, others dawdling along and looking at their reflections in shop windows, when suddenly everyone seemed to go crazy, joy lit up every face, lips parted, people jostled one another excitedly, running across the street toward us shouting: "Gorky! Gorky! Gorky!"

Out of the shops poured customers and salesmen, someone popped out of a barber shop with his face in lather. A dog trampled underfoot set up a howling, other dogs barked in chorus, street urchins on skates came flying up to the scene, whistling and yelling: "Gorky! Gorky! Cab drivers reined in at the kerb. "Where's Gorky?" "Which one?" "In the mackintosh?" "Go on, that's a tramp!" "Alexei Maximovich, greetings!" "Hail to the Russian Falcon!" "Hurrah!"

The crowd overflowed the pavement onto the street. "Move along there!" "What's the row about?" "Gorky's being taken to the police station!" "What an outrage!" "Down with the police!" "Drunk!" "You're drunk yourself!" "Hurrah!" Applause. A policeman came hurrying a trifle furtively from the direction of Nikitsky Square, blowing his whistle for all he was worth.

Gorky tried to get away from the crowd, bending forward as though breasting a gale. His hands were clenched tight in the pockets of his coat and his face was awful to behold. He dived into a doorway shouting to me: "Hold the door!"

¹ Stanislavsky

² Russian writer of the nineties, one of the most notable representatives of the naturalist school of Russian literature

¹ From a poem by the Russian poet Nadson

The janitor came to my assistance, bolting the entrance with the handle of his broom and yelling to the crowd outside: "Where do you think you're going! This is a private house!"

Gorky paused at the second floor landing and holding onto the banisters took off his galosh to shake out the snow.

"That's fame for you! Take warning!"

The hubbub outside gradually subsided. We could hear the policemen ordering the people to disperse. "Now then, gentlemen, move on, please, you're blocking the traffic!" "Get a move on, you!" "I'll show you Gorky if you're not careful!"

Gorky put on his galosh and stamped his foot to set it in place.

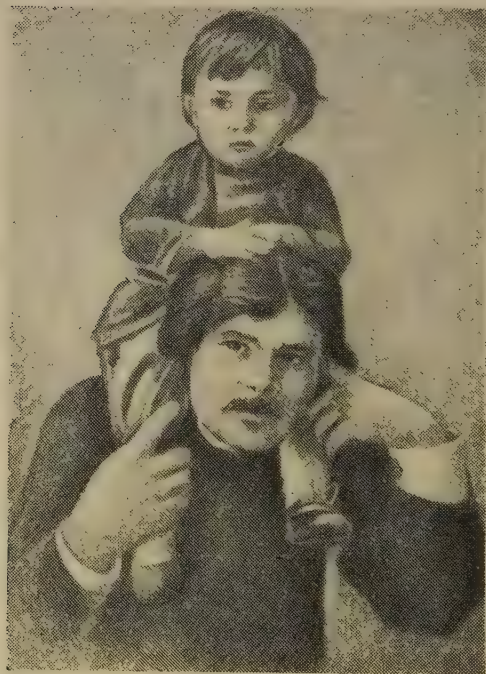
"I daresay you thought fame was all gla-

mour! Laurels, wreaths, incense! Nothing of the kind. It's like a cheap pastry, with soap mixed in the cream. I sold that kind myself in Nizhni, the young ladies at the girls' high school bought them at five kopeks a piece. They taste sweet at first but they turn your stomach afterwards!"

A whiskered police officer in a light greatcoat with a broad leather strap over his shoulder, a sabre dangling from his side and a revolver at his belt, came up the stairs.

"You may proceed," he said in a flat voice, and descending the stairs with us, added "In the future I would advise you to take a cab, Mr. Gorky. . . . Otherwise you're liable to cause a breach of peace."

Translated by Rose Prokofyeva



Maxim Gorky with his son Maxim, taken from the photograph presented by Maxim Gorky to Anton Chekhov. Gorky wrote: "Here is mine photograph with the addition of my son, a philosopher of one and a half years. This is the best thing in my life." (1899)

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS

PART I NIGHT

Chapter 1.

Danilov

Sleep just wouldn't come. Danilov got up, drew the thick curtain and let down the window. The heavy frame slid noiselessly downwards. The fittings in that train were of good quality, well made, durable, and pleasant to handle.

A fresh breeze blew in through the window. Sky and fields gleamed dully, ashen, colourless. A silent white night.

Summer had come late that year, and not at all like the usual summers. In the daytime the sun was scorching, as though it were the south, but the nights were cold. Danilov shivered as he stood by the window. How long had he been standing there? He had lost count of time.

He turned and got into his breeches and put on his boots. That buxom lady in the white feathered beret had put carpet slippers ready for him again. Fine that would look—breeches with their tight shafts reaching to the ankles, and then carpet slippers. Would he dress her husband that way, he wondered?

Without a single concession to the nocturnal hour, Danilov got into his tunic and fastened the cold creaking leather belt neatly. He also took his cap.

Somebody had to set an example, damn it, that train commandant.

In the corridor of the staff coach the window gleamed with an ashen light. Quiet. Empty. Nocturnal vacancy. Sky and fields dreamed past, light, colourless. Was the train commandant asleep? Danilov silently slid the compartment door aside and looked in. The commandant was sleeping, half-dressed, in trousers and socks, his short legs curled up like a child's. His arms were folded, hands pressed to his chin, as though he were saying his prayers.

The door of the adjoining compartment opened. The second doctor, Suprugov, emerged into the corridor wearing a blue hospital dressing gown and carpet slippers.

"Can't you sleep either, Ivan Egorych?"

"Yes. I've been asleep."

He was lying because he did not wish in any way to resemble Suprugov. If Suprugov could not sleep, then he, Danilov, ought to have done so. Or the other way about.

"I've had a good sleep. And you?"

"You know, for some reason or other I just can't sleep. Maybe it's the new surroundings."

"Why new? You're travelling in a train, that's all."

"Yes, but where are we going?" giggled Suprugov. It was disgusting, his habit of giggling. Decent people either smile or else laugh properly.

"We're going to the front, Comrade Army Doctor."

From his splendid height Danilov scrutinized Suprugov. "Pull yourself together, Doctor," he thought. "This is going to be a bit different from receiving patients in your surgery with 'Breathe deeply. Again. . . .'"

"Might be finding ourselves in a hot spot, eh?"

"What do you think—are we any different from anybody else? Of course we shall. So what? But as long as we're still alive, I'll go the rounds, if you've nothing against it."

Sucking at his cigarette, which was going out again, Suprugov followed Danilov with his eyes. The political officer's bearing was dignified and military. Suprugov began to feel uncomfortable in his dressing gown. His own fault, of course. He shouldn't slip into personal conversation. With Faina, or the other girls, well, that was another matter. But with the political officer—not on any account. Had to be on guard with that sort.

In the general coach the windows were open all along the right-hand side, yet the air was foul. The coach had soon taken on a home-like appearance. Over the girls' bunks hung mirrors, mascots and photographs of sweethearts. Those pictures might be a breeding place for bedbugs. Have to keep an eye on that.

Lena Ogorodnikova was sleeping on a lower bunk at the end of the coach. She was a funny little thing, rather like a boy, who said little but had a mischievous air. Even asleep, she looked as though something were amusing her. A palette-shaped mirror hung over the head of her bed. So a boy could use a mirror too. Opposite Lena lay Iya, her large arms flung wide, breathing heavily and snoring. How could any parents give their daughter such a name? Good girls—every one of them in men's woven undershirts or singlets, not one in a petticoat or nightdress. The day before yesterday he had discovered Iya sleeping with bare shoulders; he wakened her and then gave her extra fatigues. What kind of conduct was that? Girls should be modest.

The coaches were ready for the wounded. Beds with thick blue quilts smoothed neatly. On the smooth pillows—towels folded in triangles.

There was a smell of sulphur, lye, varnish and that peculiar odour that haunts coaches and railway stations, and cannot be obliterated either by paint or disinfectants.

These ordinary "hard" coaches were for light cases. A soldier was on guard in each. As soon as the door opened, a dark figure advanced, rifle in hand, cigarette glowing.

It was forbidden to smoke in the coaches, but Danilov turned a blind eye. A man is not a machine. The train was on its way to the front, it bore its red crosses like banners, but nobody in it was under the illusion that those crosses would offer any protection. Each knew that the enemy would make a special point of strafing them.

In the ninth coach Sukhoyedov was on duty, a stocky square-shouldered man with a large head apparently set on his shoulders with no necessity for a neck. He was the oldest man on the train, with the exception of the commandant. Danilov knew that Sukhoyedov was a veteran of the Civil War, and that during the Finnish war he had volunteered and had been wounded. On June 22, when Hitler launched his treacherous attack, Sukhoyedov appeared at the recruiting station and volunteered for action. But both his years and his health unfitted him for active service and he was assigned to the hospital train. He wore a deeply disgruntled look, as though cheated of a well-earned decoration. In peacetime he had worked in the Moscow coal fields, and the coal dust was deeply engrained in the lines of his face, making the childlike blue of his eyes all the more noticeable.

The coach for light cases was followed by the dispensary coach. The reason for the name was obscure. The dispensary occupied only one small compartment. The remaining section was given over to the dressing's compartment, the showers and ventilation apparatus. This coach was Danilov's favourite. At the very first glance he had revelled in its whiteness, its nickel fittings, linoleum, its hermetically closing doors, and the tables and chairs which folded up against the walls. Cleanliness and convenience were Danilov's ruling passion. Jealous in his care of this favourite coach, he passed his handkerchief over the windows, searching for dust. On the first day the dispenser had managed to spill iodine on the spotless, newly-painted table. Danilov had paled with annoyance on seeing the stain. Klava Mukhina, the nurse, ran herself off her feet to preserve that impossible, sterilized cleanliness which the political officer demanded.

Now, too, Klava was there in the shower room, standing on a table. Her dark-red head in its covering of muslin was bent as she gathered bandaging together into a founce. The windows were curtained, and a small light was burning.

"What are you making?" asked Danilov.

She turned a freckled, kindly, drowsy face towards him.

"A cover," she said with a weary sigh.

"Another? For the lamp?"

"No. For the nozzle."

"What nozzle?"

"Of the shower."

Drowsiness made her answers indistinct, but he understood, and was delighted at her idea.

"Aha!" he said. "When the showers aren't

in use, you'll put covers on the nozzles to make it look nice, eh?"

"Yes," she answered. "Only it's a pity that it's just muslin. Blue or pink silk would have been better."

"Yes, of course, silk would be better," he laughed. "But there's none to be had. Klava. But bandages might be dyed with washing blue."

"And then, you know, if there was any red ink," said Klava, looking confidently into his face. "It could be mixed with water and that would colour them pink."

"We'll buy red ink," Danilov promised. "The first shop we come to, we'll buy it at once."

The red-headed girl had raised his spirits. He was smiling as he passed along the rattling corridors.

The coaches designed for serious cases had no partitions and were as roomy as a hospital ward. White paint. Pendant cots in threes, one above the other, along both sides. Hanging cupboards. Chaise longues. Here, the hospital atmosphere was unmistakable. For some reason, one wanted to hurry past those hanging beds, with their side nets like children's cots.

The quarantine coach was at the very end of the train. It was an ordinary carriage with the power station at the rear end. The quarantine coach was the main objective of Danilov's inspection, here he had a presentiment that something was wrong.

In this coach no guard met him.

Danilov paused at the door of the power compartment; voices could be heard above the grinding of the wheels, but it was impossible to distinguish the words. Actually things were quieter than he had expected.

He opened the door suddenly. Nobody paid any attention, only the man on duty, Goremykin, rose; the others remained seated. Kravtsov, the chief engineer, shifted his cigarette to the corner of his mouth, slammed a card onto the table and said:

"Got you, old man."

"Not likely! Clubs are trumps," said Prokassov, the coach repair foreman, and placed his card on the table.

Suddenly the young electrician Nizvetskii rose in embarrassment.

All four men, except Goremykin, were highly skilled craftsmen—the most difficult people to deal with. And Kravtsov, in addition, was a volunteer.

"Are you searching for bottles, Comrade Political Officer?" said Kravtsov, watching Danilov. "You needn't trouble—they're a goner!"

He waved his hand. His face was flushed, his eyes dull.

Danilov sat down on a stool and pondered. The men watched him in silence, beginning to look somewhat worried and serious. Behind Danilov's back Goremykin stole away guiltily, closing the door carefully behind him. . . As far as he was concerned, everything was clear. Nothing to worry about. And the other three, too, Danilov could put them under arrest. Drunk, the sons of bitches. The day before, in Vologda, he had noticed them running about furtively and whisper-

ng... It would be easy to arrest them. But what then?

"Well, come on, deal!" said Danilov to the pale and alarmed Nizvetsky. "Deal or Fool-With-the-Load."¹

He played one game with them, putting all his skill into it, carefully watching the cards, his small, scornful mouth slightly open, showing a gold tooth. He won, and lost.

"That's the way to play. Had enough, or do you want to gamble till morning?"

Kravtsov and Protasov were gloomily silent. Nizvetsky said dubiously:

"Of course not, time to sleep."

"Well, come along then," said Danilov.

Nizvetsky followed him through the coach-station, waiting despondently for a dressing room. But Danilov said nothing and never looked back. He opened doors, and Nizvetsky closed them. The rattle of the wheels sounded loudly as they passed from coach to coach. Now real night was covering the world, the stars had disappeared, morning was near.

In the dispensary coach Klava, sighing deeply, was trying the cover on the shower.

"Look what she's thought of," Danilov said to Nizvetsky. "Making everything nice. Just wait, she's planning to have blue and pink here... Listen! I want to have a plug-in wireless. The wounded men can listen to it when they're waiting for dressings. Will you fix it?"

"Sure," mumbled Nizvetsky.

Danilov scrutinized him. He was an intelligent looking lad, his clothes were neat, evidently he was used to being well dressed.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Why weren't you accepted for active service?"

"Piles," Nizvetsky replied, blushing to the roots of his hair.

Danilov was surprised.

"Of all the old men's complaints for you to get! But you wanted active service?"

"I've worked six years on the Moscow-Vladivostok line," said Nizvetsky, excitedly. "I could have remained there, nobody would have touched me. I volunteered for a hospital train. So as to be doing something at least..."

"But in hospital trains," said Danilov, "discipline's just as strict as on active service. I'd even go further—what's permissible in a front-line man, is impossible for us. We've got to be angels. Cherubims and Seraphims, yes. We're Red Cross men and women... That vodka, God damn it," he added with quiet, restrained passion, clenching his fists, "there'll soon be none of that in this train, take my word for it."

Only a fortnight had elapsed since the war had started, but it seemed like years.

On that Sunday morning of June 22nd Danilov had wakened late, and had been angry with his wife because she had not called him. He had wanted to spend the day with his boy. And he had wanted the day to be a long one, so that both he and the

child could get the most out of it. But his wife hadn't had the heart to waken him and had shortened this rare holiday.

The boy clambered onto the bed and seated himself astride his father's knees, his clipped head like velvet, wearing his white suit and blue socks. Sunbeams flitted across the well-washed floor. The summer had only just begun, and already his boyish cheeks and legs were sunburned.

"Daddy, are we going?"

He had promised the boy an outing. Promised to get up early. It was his wife's fault that he had overslept. All morning the boy had been fretting. He would be doubting his father's word.

"We'll go, I'll just swallow a bit of breakfast and we'll be off at once."

"Oh, why must you clean your teeth? You're not going to the Trust," said the boy, standing beside him.

While his wife was preparing breakfast, Danilov went out into the garden. They had been living in the town for two years. He was director of a trust, but his wife could not accustom herself to buying vegetables from the shop and continued to grow her own. This morning Danilov looked with pleasure at the green beds. As he walked among them, he noticed that the tomatoes were coming on, and soon the lettuce would be ready for pulling. His son squatted down and asked:

"Do you think, there are any radishes yet, Daddy?"

He recalled himself and his boy at that moment; the memory was stamped like a photograph on his mind—he, Danilov, standing between the beds, the sunny sky, gay and peaceful, and his boy squatting on his heels and asking:

"Are there any radishes yet, Daddy?"

That was the last moment of his former life, with his son, with restful Sundays, with drifting thoughts of outings and picnics.

His wife came running out onto the porch.

"Vanya, war has broken out, Molotov's speaking over the radio..."

He ran into the house. The wireless was saying the last of the words that left no room for doubt. Then it fell silent. Danilov raised his head. Everything had changed. The sun shone differently. His house was no longer the same. The faces of his wife and child were different. Years seemed to divide him from that moment of peace and contemplation. And in his mind everything raced away after it.

"Daddy, we'll go all the same, won't we?" asked the boy.

He was only four years old.

"No," Danilov replied, and the little fellow began to cry...

That day Danilov went through his papers, wrote a letter to his father, went to the post office and sent the old man some money.

Among his old letters he found a crumpled envelope with the corner of a photograph protruding from it—he did not take out the card, but without glancing at it, threw it down in the bottom of a drawer.

He put a photo of his son in his notecase.

¹ A card game where the loser is left with all the cards.

That night his wife wept—softly, so as not to waken him. He pretended to be asleep.

She noticed when he stirred, raised herself on her elbow and looked into his face.

"But you'll get exemption, Vanya?"

He turned away. The question had been settled that morning, when the wireless had spoken. In the morning he would go to the recruiting office. As for her—she had least of all to say about it. A fifth wheel to the coach.

In the morning he received his call-up papers. Well, all the better. Nobody could say that he had pushed himself forward. He'd been called up, and that was that.

At the recruiting station he was sent to Potapenko, one of his friends, the director of a sanatorium. Potapenko was sitting at a bare table, in uniform, his head shaved, looking much younger, and civilians were crowding all round him. Although all these people had only just arrived, and although all the windows were wide open, the room was so full of tobacco smoke that it was almost impossible to breathe.

Potapenko pulled Danilov to him with his warm, puffy hand.

"Aha, you've arrived. Going to claim exemption?"

"No."

"Good, wait a little," said Potapenko.

There was absolutely no necessity for delaying Danilov; Potapenko dealt with men who had come much later than he had—but Danilov guessed that his friend wanted to show off a little. He enjoyed having Danilov there still in civvies, while he, Potapenko, was already in uniform, and people were coming to him for instructions and assignments. At last he called Danilov.

"Sit down," said Potapenko. "You've served in the battalion?"

"Yes."

"Good," said Potapenko, writing busily in his notebook. "You'll go to an hospital train as political officer. Stop," he added, anticipating objections on Danilov's part. "I know just exactly what you're going to say. But it's the hospital train for you. It's got to be staffed and you know how to do it."

"I don't. Do you?"

"No," said Potapenko. "But here's a booklet with instructions—take it. Choose your people, we won't quarrel over it—no time for that."

"Who's the train commandant?"

"Not appointed yet," Potapenko answered. "We'll find one all right, meanwhile you staff the train."

"Where is the train?" asked Danilov.

Potapenko laughed.

"There's no train at the moment. It's in the repair yard. But you get your people together."

"Very good," said Danilov, rising.

At the door he collided with Grigoryev, the chairman of the trade union committee at the Trust where he worked. Grigoryev, breathless, handed him an exemption slip.

"Take it and stick it on the wall," said Danilov, "and tell Merkulov (Merkulov

was his assistant) to be at the Trust this evening. I'll be there to hand over to him."

But he didn't get to the Trust that evening. It was only on the twenty-sixth that he saw Merkulov, who had already been officially appointed director by the Commissariat, in Danilov's place.

During those three days Danilov had been busy staffing the hospital train. Many people were needed—a surgeon, an assistant doctor, a theatre sister, matron, nurses, orderlies, stokers, an engineer for the power station, an electrician, conductors, a coach repair gang....

Danilov was not the only man combing the town for personnel—at least fifty hospital trains were being staffed, and all were in urgent need of doctors, sisters, orderlies, conductors....

Danilov had his own ideas about suitable people, ideas which seemed strange to many.

When it was a question of whom to select—a confident, easy-mannered assistant doctor from the town, a lively, vigorous fellow full of spirits, or a mild, colourless woman with two years' experience in a country district with a youthful, nervous look about her, not too robust—he unhesitatingly chose the woman.

And when that plain, hook-nosed Julia Dmitriyevna, swarthy as an Indian, offered herself as theatre sister, he did not take fright at her appearance, but rejoiced. At the very first glance he knew that she was just what was wanted.

Orderlies he picked from mobilized men. The Red Cross sent girls who had taken a nursing course.

He went to the barracks, where people were sitting on suitcases, as though at a station waiting-room, and called out:

"Any assistant army doctors here? Any dispensers? Comrades, attention! Any dispensers here?"

A smallish woman came up to him; she had a boyish face, a comical mixture of the roguish and the serious. A blue singlet. Cropped hair.

"You're a dispenser?" asked Danilov.

"No," she replied. "I'm a physical training instructor."

"We don't need any physical training," he said.

She laughed.

"I know. I'll go as nurse."

"No good," he said. "We need strong people for that."

She laughed again, stooped quickly, seized him below the knees, and raised him from the ground. Only for a second, but she raised him.

"Not bad," he said.

She was standing erect, her breathing untroubled.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Lena Ogorodnikova."

The big difficulty was in finding technical personnel. Electrical engineers and mechanics were snatched from under Danilov's nose. The transport service was reluctant to part with repairmen. "Manage without them," they told Danilov. "You'll be coming to us for repairs, anyway."

The train itself had not yet left the repair yard. They were waiting for the head surgeon to come and sign for it. Suprugov, the doctor, refused to undertake the responsibility.

"I'm only a subordinate, Comrades," he said.

Suprugov was very polite, laughed at everybody's jokes, and pestered people with his offers of cigarettes. One could sense his uneasiness—it was plain that the spirit in this feeble-looking civilian was restless and harassed.

Engrossed in his new work, Danilov had almost forgotten about the Trust, but on the twenty-sixth he found a couple of hours to spare and went to hand over to Merkulov. He turned into the familiar street, where he saw the notice board with the gold-leaf letters: "State Dairy Farms Trust." He noticed the crack in the lower right-hand corner, which had been there the first time he had come here to take over the work. The familiar staircase, the rattle of the abacus in the counting house, the crackle of an adding machine. The door on the left, covered with black oilcloth. . . His door. His Trust.

After handing over to Merkulov, he went around the offices and said goodbye to everybody. The old cashier wept. It was pleasant to find her so moved. Her face distorted, she said:

"And they've taken our car, have you heard? Merkulov's going into the country tomorrow by train, can you imagine it?"

After leaving the Trust, Danilov called on Potapenko. He found an old man of about sixty standing beside him, telling him something with a great deal of gesticulation. "Here, let me introduce you to your train commandant. . ." said Potapenko. "Dr. Be-

rov."

Danilov looked at the commandant. Not very promising! Short, insignificant, with a small thin face. The train commandant had not yet had time to change into uniform. Those trousers, those boots, oh, dear! What in the world was he to do with him?

But aloud, Danilov said, encouragingly: "Don't worry, Comrade Commandant, we'll get along famously!"

The commandant carried a small suitcase, to which were attached a pair of felt boots and a kettle. He had just arrived from Leningrad.

Quite unexpectedly, he responded in a cheerful, almost aggressive tone:

"Well, after all, you know, nothing else to be done—we'll just go and fight!"

"Together," said Potapenko, looking at Danilov with pleasure.

"That's right, together," said the old man.

Danilov invited him home for the night. The train commandant tripped along jauntily, flapping the rubber mackintosh which was flung over his crooked arm. Danilov took care of his suitcase with all its encumbrances.

"Why have you brought felt boots?" he asked. "Surely we'll be issued with them?"

"Well, you know, I've never been in the service," the commandant replied. "And you hear all sorts of things. Some say they'll

be issued, others say they won't. And one lady, you know, said that there won't be enough felt boots to go round, and who'll get them first? Not the medical corps, that's clear. My wife packed them. . . Just in case, eh? They can stand somewhere under a shelf, they won't be in the way, eh?"

"Well, of course," smiled Danilov.

At the supper table the train commandant ate and drank with a good appetite, and talked about Leningrad's architecture, while Danilov looked at him and thought:

"What in the world are we going to do with you?"

Next morning Danilov set out to find an electrical engineer—all the other people he already had—and the commandant went to the repair yard to sign for the train. After phoning to the yard, the evacuation office and the station, he told Danilov complacently:

"You'll find me at the station with the train."

Danilov's quest took him to the local engineering works. The previous evening the manager had agreed to release engineer Kravtsov, provided Kravtsov himself was agreeable.

Danilov had no illusions concerning the manager's generosity. He obviously wanted a good excuse to get rid of Kravtsov. There must be something queer about the man. Danilov made enquiries at the local trade union. The replies were evasive; Kravtsov was a highly qualified engineer deserving all praise, but. . .—well, we all have our weaknesses, haven't we?

"Does he drink, or what?" asked Danilov.

"Well, that can happen to anyone," was the reply.

Kravtsov's assistant was at the diesel engine. Kravtsov himself was having lunch, sitting on an overturned box with a bottle of milk in his hand. He had the lean, ascetic, stern face of a saint. A warm draught from the engine stirred a grey lock on his brow.

"Well, what about it?" asked Danilov.

"Will you serve on the hospital train?"

Kravtsov placed the bottle on the floor and wiped his lips with the back of his hand. His unflinching, stern glance summed up Danilov.

"On the train?" repeated Kravtsov. "Or under it, for that matter! Only get me out of here, I don't want to spend another day in this hole."

"How's that?" Danilov asked kindly.

"Don't you get on with the people here?"

"You know what, Comrade Political Officer," said Kravtsov. "Let's get things straight. I'm not a boy. Is that understood?"

"Quite," said Danilov.

"I've trained all the diesel men in this town. And I don't need boys from the Youth League to be giving me reprimands."

He rose, and thrust his small, oily hands into the pockets of his greasy overalls.

"In the wall newspaper—Kravtsov. At meetings—Kravtsov. An official reprimand—Kravtsov. I've no use for all this self-criticism—I tell you frankly. They yell that I'll get under the wheels when I'm drunk. Me—under the wheels!" Kravtsov gave

a wicked laugh. "But you just ask them—has there ever been even the slightest hitch in our power supply? . . . Look here, would you say I'm drunk now?"

"Just a bit tipsy," said Danilov cautiously. Kravtsov shook his head.

"Not just a bit, but well and properly soused right now. And after lunch they'll be coming to smell my breath and make remarks. . . Take me to the devil himself, in hell, Comrade Political Officer, that is, of course, if you're satisfied with me."

The two men looked one another hard in the eyes. Kravtsov's eyes were cold and assured, and Danilov's eyes were cold and assured.

"I'll take you," said Danilov.

After fixing up Kravtsov, Danilov went to the station. On the main line, beside the long grey fence, stood a shining new train—fifteen dark green coaches with red crosses, one freight car and a tiny yellow refrigerator coach. A Red Army man with a rifle stood by, on guard.

The commandant of the train was in the staff coach. He was walking about the corridor rattling his keys, a huge heavy bunch slung over his left elbow. The sun was streaming in through the windows, and there was a smell of fresh paint. The commandant's face was creased and shining with happiness and perspiration.

"Look!" he said, showing the keys to Danilov. "For all doors, all hearts."

"Everything in order?" asked Danilov.

"Why, what do you think!" said the commandant. "I've just taken her over from the commission."

"And you examined everything yourself?"

"I? . . . Why—yes."

Danilov looked at him searchingly, and the commandant's eyes dropped.

He had examined nothing. He had been given the bunch of keys, had signed a receipt, and climbed into the staff coach. A locomotive had been attached, and the commandant had left, amusing himself with the thought that he was travelling alone with seventeen coaches. The train drew up before a grey fence. The locomotive whistled and departed, and the train commandant began walking up and down the corridor, impatiently awaiting Danilov. . . He had already taken a liking to his political officer.

Danilov himself inspected the train. It turned out that everything really was in order. Or at least, so it seemed. There were some items he did not understand. For example, what was that zinc box divided into two compartments with the folding lid in the kitchen coach? Above the box were taps, shelves and hooks. Danilov stood for a long time wondering what it could be for. He

called Sobol, the quartermaster, and together they guessed that it was for washing dishes.

People were arriving, and the train began to look inhabited. Lorries drove up with sacks, linen, medicaments. Danilov counted examined, and disposed of everything. Julia Dmitriyevna, the theatre sister, seized a bundle of bandages and cotton wool, and carried it into the dispensary. The dispenser spilled iodine onto the table. Both she and Julia Dmitriyevna immediately donned white overalls and tied white kerchiefs round their heads—and immediately everybody felt awkward about entering the dispensary without an overall. The stokers tested the kitchen stoves and filled up with coal from the station. The girls made the beds, sang songs and looked at Bogeichuk, the handsome sergeant Quartermaster Sobol, Bogeichuk and others left for the commissary to stock up with food. Lena Ogorodnikova led the way back, small, light and upright, carrying a sack weighing about a hundredweight on her shoulders.

Danilov gave orders for the rice, condensed milk, chocolate and butter to be locked up separately. For the staff supper he ordered porridge.

The hospital train left for the front. It moved slowly from station to station, sometimes shunted onto sidings for half a day and more. It was overtaken by trains carrying troops and munitions. It made way for them and then followed, unhurried and unchanging.

At stations it was shunted onto the sidings, away from the bustle. On the platform people ran about, said goodbye, cursed, kissed, wept, and waved handkerchieves. . . They looked at the hospital train in grim silence as it passed by, spick and span, with its red crosses and white curtains.

On the night with which this chapter began the train was approaching Pskov.

Returning from his inspection, Danilov passed through the general coach. Suddenly a violent jerk threw him sideways, knocking his forehead against the corner of the upper berth. The wheels grated. The train stopped.

"What's the matter?" a woman's voice asked in consternation.

"What's happened?" Danilov asked in darkness, coming out onto the platform.

The conductor, shining his torch, came walking along through the train.

"Red light," he explained as he passed. "Line's blocked."

The beam of a searchlight stabbed the sky. Against the densely black background, it was blindingly bright. Silently it streamed across the inky sky, slowly, feeling to right and left, seeking and not finding.

Chapter II

Lena

Ten months before the outbreak of war, Lena Ogorodnikova had married.

An amateur festival had been arranged in a suburban village, with singing, dancing, reciting, and acrobatics. The local sports council had sent Lena.

A lorry had been fitted up with seats and Lena took her place on the back bench of the uncomfortable dusty machine. The places at the sides were occupied by people from another organization, whom she did not know.

The strangers wore leather overcoats or raincoats, and carried briefcases, while Lena was wearing a blue jersey which she had taken in at the sides to make it fit snugly to the figure. The sleeves were rolled up over her elbows. Now she would have preferred them to the ends of her fingers, but felt awkward about pulling them down. She sat there alone, away from everybody, tossed from side to side with every jolt. The wind caught her short hair and lashed her face with it.

The men were talking loudly and laughing about something. Nobody took the slightest notice of her.

It was a hot, sultry day. A heavy purple cloud crept up over the horizon, it rose higher until it had covered half the sky, and without even waiting to obscure the sun, poured down a torrent of rain. A sheet of water blotted out everything. The blue jersey, the skirt, the short hair, were drenched in an instant, while rivulets streamed down Lena's face and back. The men had drawn their coats and waterproofs over their heads and were shouting something from beneath them. The driver, in his closed cabin, was undisturbed. Lena, soaking wet, thought to herself: "What brutes they are!"

Suddenly one of the men got up. Stooping under his coat, which was drawn over his head, he crossed over to Lena and sat down beside her.

"Let's share this," he said, and drew the corner of his leather coat over her head.

She found herself in a small tent with him. She had to huddle close, so as to be under cover, while the downpour drummed on the coat.

She was so cold and wet that she did not feel the slightest awkwardness. She was only angry that help had come so late. He had taken his time over it, the idiot!

Her head was beside his chest. Looking down, she could see only her own wet knees pressed together with her skirt stretched as tightly over them as a tarpaulin cover, and a corner of the checked lining of the coat.

Suddenly she heard a loud, slow beat right by her ear. A heart beating. His heart.

Surprised, she listened. No, it had not been beating at first. That is, it had been beating, of course, but normally, inaudibly. But now it was beating quite abnormally.

Why was it beating like that?

She wanted terribly to see his face. After all, she did not even know what he looked like. Perhaps it would be better if his heart did not beat like that? No, whatever he was like, let it go on beating.

And go on beating it did.

Without moving, she managed to insert two fingers in the opening of the coat and make a tiny slit in front, to let in the light, and then, cautiously turning her head, looked up into his face.

It was shadowed, frowning, disturbed. Black eyes looked down at Lena.

She dropped her head quickly and did not raise it again. And now there were two hearts beating beneath the leather coat.

Closing her eyes, she listened to that thunder, that drumming—in herself and in him.

A warm tumult suffused her—shame, and gladness in the shame, and pride, and surprise, and triumph.

The rain stopped, and he got up.

"Well, here we are," he said, smiling with some embarrassment. "It looks as though we're arriving... But you stay like that for the present!" he added hastily, and drew the coat over her shoulders. "You'll catch cold...."

But she felt sad sitting all alone. She threw off the coat and began wringing out the hem of her skirt. The hot sun was again shining upon her. The water in the lorry was ankle-deep. There was a smell of earth, wet growing grain, steaming wormwood—wonderful air. And his face was wonderful too. And the rain had been wonderful—only why had it stopped so soon—it should have gone on and on.

They had arrived. And seeing nothing but what was within her, forgetful of the acrobatics, of her soaking clothes, she got out of the lorry.

Until then, Lena had never loved anybody.

There had been no object for her affection. Life had carried her past people, past things, past homes. She had never had her own family, her own room. Even her name had changed several times. Her mother had christened her Valentina and called her Valya. In the children's home there had been six Valentinas, and they had called her Tina, to avoid confusion. As she grew up, she became tired of the name and changed it to Elena.

She hated to look back and into the past. When she had been six, she had had an operation for appendicitis in the local hospital. After coming out of the anaesthetic in the children's ward, she had felt very bad, bitter saliva was choking her, there was nobody to wipe it from her lips, and she felt she could not call anybody. The other children had their mothers with them—it was visiting day; Lena was hidden behind a screen. "Keep quiet, it's not hurting you a bit!" said the stout nurse, when Lena groaned. She stopped groaning. She heard somebody on the other side of the screen ask:

"Whose child is that?"

"Nobody's," replied the nurse. "She's from the children's home."

It had been bad when she lived with her mother. The mother drank—as soon as there was any money, vodka and salt pickles would appear, other women would come from somewhere, and there would be drinking, singing and laughter.

Lena's mother was a rag-picker. Sometimes she would disappear for two or three days, and one day she returned with a man. They had supper and went to bed, while Lena was put to sleep on a couple of chairs. In the morning Lena awakened, went up to the bed and began examining the visitor. He was sleeping on the outer side, his thick arm hanging almost to the floor. There were blue veins running down that arm, and the fingers on the hand were covered with thick black hairs down to the knuckle. She took up a stick and hit that horrible hand with the blue veins. But the hand never stirred.

At dinner time the mother rose and went to the shop, and then she and the visitor sat down to eat. Lena was given half a glass of beer and a piece of jelly. From the conversation she realized that her mother intended going away somewhere, and felt delighted. At first the beer made her giggle, then she felt drowsy and fell asleep where she sat. The next day her mother took her out and showed her a two-story white plastered house.

"This is where you're to go," she said. "Go straight in, all by yourself. Say you're an orphan, and that you are all alone."

The mother baked cakes, laid the table, and there was a great feast. She would dance, still untidy in her new silk blouse, and then sit down at the table again, her chin propped on her hands.

Lena soon became tired of the noise and stamping. She put on a torn, knitted cap, her only one, which she wore winter and summer. She took her toys—an empty polish tin and the handle of an awl. Quietly, unobserved, she went out, and marched straight to the two-story white plaster house.

"I'm an orphan," she told the two tall girls with cropped hair standing at the gate. "I've neither father nor mother, I'm all alone."

The girls said nothing, but looked down at her seriously. Lifting up her face, she repeated the words she had been taught. Then one of the girls asked:

"How old are you?"

The second turned to her companion.

"Let's call Anna Yakovlevna."

Lena peered in through the gate, and saw a garden with swings and green grass everywhere.

"I'm an orphan," she repeated gaily.

Anna Yakovlevna came, took Lena by the hand and led her into the house.

Grownups surrounded her and began asking her who had told her to come here and where she lived. She was so small that they had to seat her on a table so as to talk with her conveniently, but she was too clever for them.

"Nobody told me," she replied, swinging her legs. "And I don't live anywhere."

She realized that they wanted to send her home. But what she wanted was to remain in this house with its swings and the green grass.

"I'd like to live here," she said frankly.

The people laughed, and a man in gold-rimmed glasses said:

"We must inform the militia."¹

She spent the night in the house, sleeping with the cook, who bathed her and cut her hair. That evening and the next morning the big children played with her. There were no small children in the home.

As she bathed Lena, the cook said indignantly:

"A mother like that—I'd bash her face against the wall. . . What's she been thinking about, to let the child get covered with vermin?"

A militiaman arrived. The man in the gold-rimmed glasses called Lena aside and warned her that she must tell the militiaman the whole truth, otherwise things would go badly for her—he'd take her to the militia-station.

"All right, I don't mind, Lena replied. "I don't mind a bit, and I'm not afraid of a militiaman."

And she told the militiaman too that she was an orphan and had nowhere to live.

"But what does your mother do?" asked the militiaman.

"She collects rags," said Lena.

Everybody burst out laughing. But all the same, the woman who collected rags and who had a little girl called Valentina was not to be found; she had already left, and Lena was handed over to a home for young children.

She spent a year there. She was a well-behaved child, not the least capricious, and got on well with people. Without any special affection for anybody, demanding nothing of anybody, she could put up with anything. She took what was given to her with pleasure, but without gratitude.

She soon became accustomed to being cared for and found nothing surprising in the fact that people fed her, clothed her, and taught her to read, that some women would wash her clothes and prepare her meals, while others would clap their hands in front of her, singing:

"With our little feet

We go tap, tap, tap;

With our little hands

We go clap, clap, clap. . . ."

Besides that they would sing *Enemy storm clouds rage above us, and Arise, ye prisoners of starvation*. Lena regarded singing as necessary duty.

A year later the home was reorganized and Lena was transferred to another place in a different town. There the winter was longer and colder, and the stoves were heated with wood instead of coal, but otherwise things were much the same.

She was growing. The little girl Valya was something belonging to the past, to the long ago, she was somebody else now. This girl was known as Tina. She had a place to live in but no home. She had friends but no family. She enjoyed care, but no tenderness. She was neither hurt nor caressed.

She carefully did whatever was asked of her—she did not like being scolded. When she was seven years old, a new head was appointed to the home, a member of the Youth League.

"Forget about all that," he said, on hearing the song *With our little feet*. "You're going to make idiots of the children. They're not so far from being idiots now. What the need is physical training."

The gymnastics lessons just suited Lena: she was the strongest and most agile of all the children. She was praised, and that was pleasant too. From then onwards, she tried to do everything so as to earn praise.

In the 7th Form the pupils were instructed in the Constitution. The teacher would read out an article of the Constitution and

¹ The civil police in the U.S.S.R.

then labouriously explain that this article was good and just. Lena kept looking at the teacher and wondering: "Why is he trying so hard to explain something that's perfectly clear, anyway?"

Lena was already in her fifth children's home, she was a member of the Youth League, she was studying at a physical training course, and was called Elena. Again the teacher was talking about the same thing, but this time from another angle. . . He was showing that the Soviet state is the most just in the world. . . But no other state existed for Lena. She was a child of that state. It had been her home, her land, her sky. To any person in that land she could say: comrade. From anyone she could take bread, and with anybody she would share it. She went without confidence into any factory or office, and so long as the talk was official, businesslike, she was self-confident, clever and resourceful. But if talk turned upon herself and her personal affairs, she became shy and reserved; she was not accustomed to that kind of talk.

Twice she had just escaped becoming too fond of somebody.

After finishing the course, she became a teacher of physical training in a railway school, and went to live in the railway hostel.

The secretary of the district physical training committee was a girl—Katya Gryaznova. Katya had foolish, kindly black eyes and cheeks like hams. She herself had nothing to do with physical training, and from her ordinary life in the office she was rolling fat. She had the greatest admiration for Lena.

"How on earth can you live in a hostel?" she said. "No one there to serve you, nobody to look after you. . ."

She invited Lena to live with her, and Lena went. Katya's mother had a three-roomed cottage, kept a cow and had a garden with fruit trees. They drank tea from a samovar, under a cherry tree. On Katya's bed there was a pile of embroidered pillows and cushions, her mother's handiwork. Lena gazed longingly at these cushions.

"Yes, you're very comfortable here," she said with an involuntary sigh.

"Stay with us," said Katya. "We'll be like sisters. Pay what you like. Our cow's a good milker, you'll put on weight. Because you're like a skeleton."

"Yes, do stay with us, Lenchka," said Katya's mother. "Katya's so fond of you. It's not good for a young girl, living in these hostels. You never know what may happen to you."

The mother was a quiet, gentle soul, with lines of tiny lines round her eyes, which were as kindly as Katya's.

Lena took up her abode with them. A bed was arranged for her in Katya's room, and Katya shared her pillows with her friend. Lena drank milk fresh from the cow, and life became comfortable and easy. But it didn't last very long.

There was a young man who was in the habit of visiting Katya; a friend from child-

hood days. He was an assistant bookkeeper in some office or other, and in the evenings would play his mandoline in the garden under the cherry tree. Lena had no time for him—he was not interested in sports; she couldn't even have told the colour of his eyes.

One evening, upon coming home, she found Katya in tears.

"Why, what's the matter?" she asked in genuine sympathy.

"Nothing," Katya replied. She wiped away her tears, and sat there sullenly, without looking at Lena. Katya's mother was grumbling audibly in the next room.

"A very fine thing, I must say—to act like that towards people who've been decent to you."

"What's the trouble?" asked Lena.

"If folks are kind to me," Katya's mother continued, coming into the room, "then I feel I ought to act right by them and not this way."

"What on earth are you talking about?" asked Lena, who hadn't the faintest idea that this could concern her.

"We've treated you like one of the family, Lenchka," said Katya's mother. "And this is the thanks we've got; it's beyond me, in my day a young girl would never have behaved like that."

"I don't understand what you're talking about," said Lena. "I haven't done anything."

"Now don't you try to make excuses, my dear. It's always the woman who's to blame in these cases. A young fellow—he's like a calf, where you pull him, there he'll go."

"You don't mean to say," asked Lena in astonishment, "that you think I'm in love with Katya's fiancé?" She burst out laughing. "I've never given him as much as a thought."

"Nobody says that you're in love with him, my girl," replied Katya's mother. "But since he's in love with you, I must say that I don't think you've behaved very well."

Katya laid her head on the table and sobbed.

"I don't know anything about it," said Lena, a ring of anger in her voice. "He can go to the devil for all I care, what possessed him to pick on me?"

"That's just the question, what possessed him. A young fellow, doesn't drink, good-looking, earning good money. . ."

Lena went into the room she shared with Katya and lay down on the bed. People are all right so long as you don't get too close to them. Now all that she wanted was to get out of that house.

Katya came in, sat down and put her arms round Lena.

"Don't be angry with Mummie," she said. "I know it isn't your fault. All men are brutes, that's all."

Lena laughed. Katya kissed her, proud of her magnanimity. Lena drank her milk and thought: "I don't want any of this, I'm going."

A couple of days later she received a long love-letter from Katya's fiancé. She tore it into fragments and returned to the hostel.

The second case was six months before she married.

The ground floor of the hostel served as the men's quarters. Up above, on the women's floor, everything was clean and tidy; shining aluminium saucepans stood on the stove, and a bright-blue kettle. The men fried eggs, and heated water to shave in enamel mugs, black with smoke. They scattered cigarette ash on the floor. Lena avoided having anything to do with them.

One day, as she was passing along the lower corridor, one of the men called to her.

"Comrade," he said in a deep baritone, "excuse me, but have you a thermometer?"

"What sort?" asked Lena, stopping.

"An ordinary one, I want to take my temperature," answered the baritone. "I feel feverish, but I haven't got a thermometer."

"Just a minute, I'll ask," said Lena, and went upstairs.

One of her roommates had a thermometer. Lena went down with it.

The baritone was waiting trustfully where she had left him. He thanked her and asked in which room she lived. A quarter of an hour later there was a knock at the door.

"Thirty-nine point four," he said, as though she had enquired. "Darn the thing, just can't get rid of it."

"What's the trouble?" asked Lena, who had never had an illness in her life except for appendicitis.

"Malaria."

He hung about the door, evidently reluctant to go. His face was long, thin, hook-nosed, inspired.

"And my quinine's finished," he said, dropping his head in a martyrlike way—like pictures of Christ saying: "Not my will, but Thine, be done." "But I'll go to the chemist's at once. I'm used to going about with any kind of temperature," he added with a wave of the hand.

It was winter, with 22 degrees of frost outside.

"Give me the prescription," said Lena, "I'll go."

"Oh, but why should you?" he said.

"As you like," she replied.

"It costs one ruble twenty kopeks," and he gave her the prescription and the money. His fingers were very long and thin. He held the little finger poised as he extracted the coins from his purse.

She brought him the quinine and gave him tea with lemon. She felt sorry for him.

They soon became friends. Every evening he would come and knock at her door, and when he felt ill, she would go down and look after him. He told her about himself—he was an engineer. She was surprised—she had not thought that engineers lived together with train conductors in hostels.

"I used to have a fine apartment," he explained. "I left it to my wife."

He had had two wives. Both of them, according to his story, had left him. Their way of leaving him was strange—the apartment and furniture remained for their use, and the deserted baritone changed casually over to a new, bachelor life. He had had children by his wives.

"Delightful little girls," he said, sighing.

"But how was it," asked Lena, "that you couldn't get on with both of them?"

He began whistling. He whistled quite well, not in the least like street boys. "That's part of Chaikovsky's Fourth Symphony," he said, when he stopped. Then he asked Lena if she liked poetry, and recited Asseyev's verses: "No, you are not dear to me, lovers are not like you." The verses moved her, she had never heard anything of that kind before, her acquaintance with poetry having been confined to the seventh-class reader. He, on the other hand, knew an endless number of poems, and could recite them at any time, day or night. They began sitting up late together. She felt a thirst to see him and hear him recite. . . . But once, in his room, when he had been reciting *The Gipsies* and ended with the last lines: "And always passion brings its doom, from fate there's no escaping," he continued in the same beautiful voice: "I love you," and covered her mouth with his wet lips, smelling of tobacco. She sprang up and pushed him away with such force that his malaria-wasted form struck against the door.

"Drastic," he said, after a short silence.

She rose, drew herself up, clenched her little fists, then with a quick light step went past him and out of the door, without vouchsafing him another glance.

Back in her own room, she rinsed out her mouth. But that was not enough for her. She proceeded to clean her teeth. She felt as though she had swallowed something foul.

And then love came.

Nobody had ever loved like that.

"Kiss me. . . ."

"You're wonderful. You have knees like a statue—you know? A Greek statue."

Who had ever heard such things before?

"Sleep, little one. Is my arm comfortable round you?"

Who had ever been cared for like that?

"Kiss me. . . ."

For the first time in her life she had her own home. It was only one room, but look at all the things it contained: a wardrobe with a mirror, a nice folding table, a writing desk, a divan and chairs! And in the kitchen there was her cupboard with pots and pans and crockery. And all this belonged to her, and she belonged to Danil, Danya, Danka—the loveliest name in the world! For twenty years she had belonged to nobody and now she walked happily arm in arm with her lawful spouse.

She thought him quite elderly—he was already twenty-eight. She was glad that he was not too young—it seemed to lend weight to her too.

He loved to bring her presents—she was so pleased and happy about every trifle. "I've never had such shoes," she said. "And I never had such a frock." And deeply moved he would answer: "Darling, you ought to have a dozen frocks like that. . . ."

Even ordinary chocolates she ate with such enjoyment that it was pleasant to watch her.

When she was busy about the house, she always put on a large apron, and looked at though she had never done anything else except housekeeping.

Life was one round of bliss. Love had transformed Lena; her walk, the very carriage of her shoulders had changed. Her voice had taken on a low, cooing note. Her eyes had narrowed and darkened. She radiated light and happiness, people turned to look at her in the street, and that only increased her pride and joy.

Ten months passed. Ten months, three hundred days, three hundred nights.

He was called up at once.

It was a dreadful day. For the first time she saw that something else apart from herself held the dominant place in his life.

He moved about the room, gathering odds and ends together, replying to her absent-mindedly. . . .

She was not hurt or offended. That was not the point. It was simply that she saw this side of him for the first time.

The dominant place in his life was held by man's business, and this business now called him. He had not yet gone, but he no longer belonged to her.

It could not be otherwise. She covered her face with her hands. Had it been otherwise, she could no longer have loved him.

No, that was not right—she could never have ceased to love him, but her pride and happiness would have been dimmed. She was a sportswoman, an Amazon, a winner of contests, she understood such things. One can only feel triumph and pride in victory over the strong. Was there any great honour in gaining victory over a weak heart? He had a strong heart. She was proud of him.

She had to do something to make him realize that she understood. So that he should depart, satisfied with her.

First and foremost, she must conceal her despair. He was fully master of himself—simple, calm. He cracked jokes. She could do the same.

And then she must help him to pack. She was sitting there with folded hands like a visitor. There he was, stuffing a shirt into his haversack, and she remembered that it needed a button.

"Just a minute, Danya, I'll see to that. . . ."

She took his underwear out of the haversack, examined and mended everything. She made up a parcel of food—not too much, he told her. She remembered his shaving gear. And boot polish, and a brush. She packed envelopes, paper, matches.

He sat there and watched her packing his things. That was as it should be—the man resting and smoking, while his wife got him ready for war.

And when the packing was done and he went up to her and embraced her for the last time, she laid her head on his shoulder and looked into his face with a new feeling—an infinite nearness and tenderness that wrenched her heart.

She was his sister, his mother, just as she had been his sweetheart. She was everything in the world to him.

She accompanied him to the station and parted without tears.

"What will you do when I'm gone?" he asked.

Smiling apologetically, she replied:

"I haven't even thought of that."

He looked at her with a twinge of alarm.

"You won't do anything crazy, eh?"

"No . . . not too crazy. . . ." she promised.

"Darling, please, no romantic heroics. War's a grim business, got to be waged soberly."

"Don't worry, there'll be no romantic heroics."

They kissed fondly for the last time, and after that words failed them. He entered the coach, and she left the station in a daze.

Oblivious to her surroundings, she returned home. The room was littered with things. . . All of it useless, if he was not there. How long would the war last? Two years, he had said. Two years! When without him, not a single minute of life was of any value. The loneliness would kill her. How should she fill her life? She would suffocate.

She sank down onto the floor among the open suitcases and scattered linen. Her face was ashen, her eyes dull. Even her lips were grey. But then a smile curved those lips, she raised her eyes and they were shining. She would follow the same path as he.

She rose, took off the dress in which she had seen him off, and put on an old blue jumper, darned at the elbows. One key she would hand in to the house committee, the other to Katya Gryaznova, and ask her to keep an eye on things. Nothing for her to do here. Just put everything away—suppose he returned before her? She cleaned and tidied the room, locked the door of heaven behind her and directed her steps to the recruiting office.

Danilov assigned Lena to the dispensary coach; he thought she would be quick and skillful in laying patients on the operating table. But Julia Dmitriyevna, the theatre sister, said to the train commandant:

"Comrade Commandant, you must give me another nurse."

"Why, what's the matter?" said the doctor who was always obliging with everybody. "Don't you like her?"

"No. I don't."

"H'm," said the doctor. "And you know, I felt, too, that she was a little—you know?"

Julia Dmitriyevna compressed her thin lips, straight as though drawn with a ruler.

"Yes, just exactly that."

"Not just the thing, eh?"

"Flightiness written all over her," hissed Julia Dmitriyevna.

"Yes, yes, yes, flightiness, yes. . . Very well" said the doctor, nodding authoritatively. "I'll consider the matter."

To Danilov he said:

"What about sending another nurse to the dispensary, eh?"

"Why?" asked Danilov. "Don't you think Ogorodnikova will be able to manage the work?"

"No, hardly. The sister and I thought it over—it'll be too much for her. She's light, light. We need someone sturdier there."

Danilov did not argue—a medical man should be the best judge. He sent Klava Mukhina to the dispensary, and brought Lena into the Krieger coach.

Lena fussed about all day, making sure that everything was spick and span. Dust constantly kept settling on the windows or the varnished shelves. She was rather hurt at having been removed from the dispensary. Of course, she owed it to that red-faced beast, the theatre sister. Ugly creature she was, no two ways about it. Probably nobody had ever loved her. Serves her right. Why did she want to get her knife into her, Lena? Well, Lena's coach would be the cleanest of all, just to spite her. And she went about all day with buckets and mops, wiped the windows with newspaper as Katya's mother had done, and aired the blankets. . . Flies, flies, where did they all come from! No food in the coach, not a single person, but one had already flown in, and another after it. . . Lena stalked the flies. One she caught, the other got away and took cover somewhere. Lena could not find it. Klava Mukhina made shades for the lamps out of bandaging, decorated with numerous flounces. Lena envied her—she could not make flounces. She wanted to make friends with Klava, ask how it was done, but Klava was in the dispensary day and night, and Lena avoided that coach as much as possible, so as not to meet Julia Dmitriyevna.

. . . Always, wherever she was, she felt her husband close to her. True, she could no longer talk to him, as she used to, and study every movement to please him, she had too much to do; but not for a single moment did she forget that he was there and every now and then addressed herself to him. "There, that's it, Danya," she said absent-mindedly, as she plumped up the pillows on the beds and stood back to admire her work. "And now we'll just wash the floor once more!" she told him. It was only when the time came to rest that she plunged deep into that gay, tender world that held only him, her and their love.

But there was precious little time for that world. She would be called into the kitchen to help peel potatoes, or there would be a lecture on personal hygiene by Dr. Suprugov. In the morning Danilov summoned the entire personnel to read them the latest communiqué, to explain what barbarians the fascists were, that our reverses were but temporary, that in the end the Red Army would be victorious, and the Hitlerites smashed. . . Lena listened to Danilov and thought: "Why do you have to talk so much about it—I know myself that we'll win, Danya and I, it can't be any other way, because otherwise it would mean that they'd kill Danya and kill me, and we'd never be happy again. . ." She was not unduly alarmed that the Germans were taking town after town. Another town captured—well, it couldn't be helped. In any

case they'd be pushed back again. Only let it be soon, so that the old life could return quickly, so that Danya could come back. She had not yet had any letters from him, but she felt that he was alive.

Lena slept soundly; disturbed neither by Danilov's inspection rounds nor the bumping of the train. When she woke up, it was already getting light. She had had a wonderful dream just before waking.

She lay there, smiling in her dream, eyes closed—and in the same moment, before opening them, she remembered—none of it was real, she was in the hospital train, on the way to fetch wounded, and the train had stopped—was it possible that they had arrived?

She jumped up and leaned out of the window; she saw a railway hut, meadow and forest; birds were already singing in the trees, and the sunrise glowed in the east, rosy and airy; it brought tears to her eyes; it was so beautiful! And fluffy little clouds all over the sky, like rosy down—she had never seen such a sky. . . .

Another stop. They're in no hurry about us. . . .

She had risen early, and the others were still asleep. There were still two hours before reveille. She could lie there and gaze out of the window—perhaps she'd have another lovely dream. . . .

But there was Danilov, he was already up and about, coming out of the kitchen coach. Lena put on a skirt and left the train, barefoot. It was a fresh morning, the birds were now in full throat. A lilac bush in the hedge beside the hut was thick with blossom—no leaves to be seen, only the huge bunches of flowers. . . Lena wanted to pull a branch, she began making her way to the hedge.

"Heh, Ogorodnikova," Danilov called to her. "Get back we'll be starting any minute. You'll be left behind."

Lena nearly pursed her lips. Starting! An express like that!—couldn't she jump on when it was moving! As she broke off the branch, fresh drops sprinkled her face.

The train jerked into motion. Danilov and Medvedyev went into the coaches. Lena purposely waited, standing on the lines, warm wind from the passing wheels fanning her bare legs. When the last coach drew level with her, she seized the handrail, and swung lightly onto the step, which was knee-high. Standing there, she felt very pleased with the agility of her jump, with her strength, with the pleasant breeze, fanning her forehead and shoulders. . . "See that, Danya," she said, "see what a girl you've got. . ." And having given him enough time to admire her, she went into the coach.

Chapter III

Doctor Belov

In Leningrad, the hospital train pulled into the Vitebsk goods-station. A locomotive had been promised within an hour and a half, but two hours had passed, and there was no sign of it. Meanwhile, Dr. Belov was pacing

up and down beside the headquarters coach muttering:

"This is terrible . . . terrible. . . ."

But he was not referring to the delay. From Vologda the doctor had telegraphed his wife

at the train would be going through Lenin-
grad, and asked her to meet him at the sta-
tion, but he himself had only known that
morning at which station they would stop.
And now she was not there. The suspense
was terrible. And the worst of it was that
she might have come already, she might be
talking about that scorching labyrinth of
rails looking for him. There were dozens
of trains here, thousands of coaches, she would
never have time to find him before the en-
gine came and they had to go. The doctor
was in a ferment. Several times he thought
of going to seek his wife among the other
trains. Once he had already left the coach,
and then was seized with apprehensions—
suppose the train left without him? Of course,
he could overtake it. But what would Danilov
say? The doctor stood somewhat in awe of
Danilov.

At that moment Danilov himself came up
and saluted. It was the first time he had seen
Danilov that day. In the morning there had
been a meeting of the Communist Party mem-
bers to elect the Party organizer. Julia Dmitri-
yevna had been chosen, and Danilov had vot-
ed for her because there was nobody else, but
now he was feeling worried and dubious. For
all her masculine traits, Julia Dmitriyevna
was still a woman, and the Party organizer
could certainly have no easy time with Dr.
Belov. In his own mind, Danilov put the
matter in this way: it was necessary to make
the train commandant out of Dr. Belov. How
could weak female hands deal with a matter
like this?

Danilov saluted the doctor, pitying him
in his heart. Here he was, walking about in
the stifling heat in full uniform. The breast
pockets of his tunic were stuffed out till they
looked like squares of iron—what in the world
could he have in them? Under the shining
peak of his cap his shining nose jutted out;
rickles of perspiration were running down
his face. The doctor was baking like a sun-scorched
roof.

"It's hot!" said Danilov.

"Unbearably," replied the doctor. "I can
feel the heat of the gravel even through my
boots."

Danilov looked down curiously—so this
was called gravel? He liked to know things
like that. These old intellectuals always used
such expressions.

"Where on earth have they brought us?"
the doctor continued. "This is like a railway
jungle. I'm an old Leningradman, but I'm
baffled if I know this place."

Danilov made no reply; what difference
did it make where they were standing? The
important thing was to move, and get to
their destination. He knew nothing of the
commandant's suspense, he did not know
that the commandant was ready to cry like
a child.

"Ivan Egorych," said the doctor, "are you
on good terms with your wife?"

"What do you mean?" asked Danilov in
surprise. "She's my wife; what sort of terms
could there be?"

"No, but you know," said the doctor, slight-
ly embarrassed, "I just wanted to ask . . .
you . . . well, it's this way, sometimes people

live together for thirty years, but there's
no real friendship—it's that way sometimes,
isn't it?"

Danilov looked away.

"Sometimes, of course. . . ."

"And sometimes it's just the opposite,"
said the doctor, and suddenly his face shone,
lit up with tenderness, pride, shy triumph;
Danilov's amazement was complete.

Rounding the rear coach of a neighbouring
train, a tall grey-haired woman—she topped
the doctor by a head—was crossing the lines.
She was wearing a plain grey dress and a
black straw hat of the fashion of twenty years
ago.

"Sonechka," said the doctor weakly. "I
thought you weren't coming. Ivan Egorych,
allow me to introduce my wife. . . Sonechka,
this is Ivan Egorych Danilov, I'd be lost
without him."

The woman looked into Danilov's face
and held out her hand. From the other hung
a huge string bag bulging with parcels.

"Come, I'll show you my compartment,"
the doctor mumbled, beside himself with hap-
piness. "You're alone. . . Give me the bag. . .
Well, of course you're alone. . . Always
alone, always. . . ."

"Igor's digging trenches," the woman re-
plied, following him. "And Lyalya couldn't
get off from work. I've brought you your mit-
tens, Nikolai, you forgot your mittens."

"Just look at that, like a young fellow,"
thought Danilov, as he watched the doctor
help his wife into the coach. There was a
deep red weal on her hand from the thong of
the heavy bag, a wrinkled, pale, thin hand.

The ventilator was humming in the com-
partment.

The doctor and his wife were sitting on
the divan, hand in hand. The parcels from
the string bag were on the table.

"Sonechka, have you thought, we're sit-
ting here just as we did on the evening before
I left, remember? And remember how I said
then that it might be the last time? And now
here we are, sitting together again, eh? And
that was only ten days ago, eh? You know
what I think? I think that we shall be sitting
together many, many times more yet. What
do you think?"

She kissed his damp, salty forehead and
said tenderly:

"And I think so too. Only give me some
water. Cold, and plenty of it."

The doctor jumped up and seized his head.

"My dear, forgive me! I thought of noth-
ing, as usual! You're quite exhausted! Wan-
dering about in that jungle! Looking for me!
Good heavens! . . . Here's a water bottle,
just a second, only it's warm, unpleasant. . . ."

There was a knock at the mirror-backed
door. Fima, buxom and rosy, in her white
beret, came in coquettishly with a tray con-
taining a coffee-pot, biscuits, and a jug of
fruit water with ice floating on top. Another
face peeked over Fima's shoulder—every-
body was curious to see the commandant's
wife.

The doctor brimmed over with happy laugh-
ter.

"Sonechka, that's Danilov! I assure you

that it's Danilov! What a man! Fima, who sent that, Danilov?"

Pouring out the coffee, Fima replied in official tones:

"The quartermaster instructed me to say that pork cutlets will be ready in ten minutes."

"Sonechka, don't drink your coffee yet. First eat the cutlets. That's Danilov, of course, not the quartermaster. He gives us nothing but millet porridge, not another thing. . . I didn't even know that we had pork. That's Danilov wanting to impress you. What a man! Ah, there's a man for you! . . . Fima, bring in the cutlets, bring them in, bring them in. . . ."

His wife wanted him to have some with her. It was too hot, she said, for warm fat, she couldn't eat it all, he knew quite well that she couldn't eat so much. . . He refused, but when she held out a piece to him on a fork, he swallowed it delightedly. No, it was wonderful, wonderful luck that she should have found him!

"But how did you find us? I'd never in the world have been able to do it. . . I'm talking nonsense, my dear, please forgive me. What was it I wanted to say. . . Yes! You won't be sent to dig trenches?"

"No. They're not sending me."

"But of course, of course. Your health. . ."

"Nobody is sending me. I'll go of my free will."

A quiver passed over her face.

"They're beating us, oh, how they're beating us, Nikolai. . . ."

He looked at her, confused.

"Beating us, yes. . . That's only at first."

"Oh, I know it's only at first! I've seen a man from Vilnius. It's so awful. . . I don't want to talk about it. Ask me something else. What was it you were going to ask me?"

"Lyalya and Igor?"

"Lyalya's working. People say that they're going to be sent off too in a few days. Igor has left with the first lot."

"Where?"

"To Pskov."

She burst into tears. He dropped her hand and looked at her in horror. She had never cried in the old days. He remembered how he had sometimes felt twinges of jealousy—she always seemed to put her son first. The boy was nothing to be proud of—lazy, rude, always away from home, running about, God knows where, and the doctor had resented her readiness to forgive the lad anything, the way she kept saving tastiest portions for him, and put their daughter second. But now he understood—she had intuitively felt that there was a special destiny awaiting the boy, the destiny of war; hadn't she often said: "Don't worry, he'll finish school, serve his time in the army, and all that'll be smoothed out." She had known he'd be going with the first group to dig trenches; that was why she had loved him best and spoiled him. . . .

"Sonechka, don't cry," said the doctor. "Why, he's not been killed yet, dear, no need to cry like that!"

"I'm not crying about him. I'd go myself, if it wasn't for my work. I'm crying because I can't bear to listen to those communiques."

Yes, her work. He had not asked anything about her work.

"At work everything's the same. Sometimes it makes me angry—times like these and people bothering about false teeth. One fool of a woman brought some gold. She had two white metal crowns, and wanted gold ones put in. I just couldn't keep it in, and I told her: 'A fine time to be bothering about changing your teeth!' She took offense and went to look for another dentist. Let her go the fool."

"Let her go," he repeated mechanically.

They fell silent, and for a long time sat there looking at each other with their kindly tear-stained eyes. A white skin formed over the coffee in the cups, they had forgotten about it. They had also forgotten the fruit juice.

Another knock at the door. Danilov entered with an apology, and told them that the engine was just being coupled on.

"What's that?" asked the doctor. "Already? That means we're going, Sonechka. . . ."

Danilov went out, to let them say goodbye undisturbed. Then the doctor's wife left. She walked across the lines—tall, stooping very slightly, her grey hair peeping out from under her old black hat. The doctor stepped along beside her, small, but with an added manliness from his uniform—seeing her off.

Before the war the doctor had kept a diary. In the depths of his heart he felt sure that he had literary talent. After all, there had been writers who were doctors—Chekhov, Veresayev. Well, he might not be a novelist but a publicist, like. . . "Marat," Sonechka had suggested one day, when he had confided these ideas to her. The doctor had taken offense at her levity and had not told her about the diary, but wrote in secret. He felt especially afraid of his children finding out. He had no idea that his wife and daughter unknown to each other, used to take the book from his drawer and read every word of it.

One pleasant thing about writing was that every small event gained added importance, sometimes even a kind of magnificence when put in literary form. If ever the doctor chanced to show some acquaintance in an unpleasant light, he never used the real name but replaced it by letters of the alphabet such as NN, X, or Z. He did not want to let people who came to play preference with him to be disgraced after his death, when his diary would be discovered and published.

When he left home, he had placed the diary in a folder, fastened it with string and sealed it with wax.

"Sonechka," he said, holding out the package to his wife in both hands. "I beg you to take care of this and open it only if. . . You understand. . . ."

After his wife's visit to the train, he again felt the urge to write. He opened a thick virgin exercise book, sniffing its oilcloth cover with pleasure, sighed and wrote:

"July 2, 1941, Sonechka came."

And suddenly all desire to write left him. The train was running and it was cool in the compartment. The ventilator was humming. . . Here was the place where she had sat, in the corner. Had she managed to catch

tram, or was she still waiting? . . . The doctor's head sank onto the exercise book and he sat there for a long time, without moving.

"A strange man, NN," the doctor wrote next day, having regained mastery of himself. "I understand I. E. Danilov, I understand our nice, though rather grim, theatre star. I understand that girl in the beret who looks after me and is so pleased if I raise the way a table-napkin is folded, I understand that drunkard Z, I understand everybody in the train, but NN I cannot understand at all. And yet he is the man who is closest to me here, or at least, he should be the closest. We are men of the same profession, we could find enough to talk about for hours, but for some reason I have no desire to talk to him. He presses cigarettes upon me, he is all politeness, but there is nothing behind that politeness. I talked to him about current affairs; he used exactly the same words which we find in the official newspaper reports. I talked about professional matters; he agreed with everything I said, even when I purposely talked nonsense. I asked about his family; he is a bachelor, and lives with his old mother. It appears that he is a bibliophile, he has a whole library in his commitment; when I asked him to let me read something, he was confused, stammered and fumbled, promised to lend me a book and has given me nothing. One can't call him a philanthropist; he mixes with people, but he makes them do the talking while he agrees with everything. I can see that I. E. does not love him."

The doctor dipped his pen, remembered how the writers of old romances described their heroes, and concluded:

"There is something about him which is mysterious and repulsive."

Faina, the head sister, also found Suprugov mysterious. But not in the least repulsive. Oh, no! It was just this touch of mystery that attracted Faina.

"Doctor," Faina said to Suprugov, nudging him with her warm shoulder. "What are you thinking about all the time? I want to know. Do tell me."

Faina was half a head taller than Suprugov, plump, blooming and effusive. Perhaps under other circumstances Suprugov might have found her attentions flattering, but now he was in no mood for them.

Suprugov was afraid. That was the whole secret.

He was frantically afraid.

Suprugov's speciality had been a quiet one—ear, nose, and throat, his patients had been children with adenoids, and deaf old people. Suprugov would look important, he could anoint, clean, cauterize, but he knew that deafness would not hinder a person from living another twenty years, and he did not that deep feeling and respect for man suffering that one finds in the surgeon, the pediatricist, or the village doctor. Suprugov was not accustomed to the sight of suffering and death. His patients were wracked with pain; they knew discomfort, but not agony, and when they died, it was from some other cause which did not concern Sup-

rugov. . . . He was very well satisfied with such a quiet practice. He took the greatest care of his own health, and treated every trifle. Once he had a gathered finger; he always remembered it with a shudder—that had been terrible! His mother had been surprised by his groans.

"Does it really hurt so much?"

She was a carefree old woman who had borne seven children and buried six of them; she had had her share of pain and suffering, but even at the age of seventy her eyes still held that fiery spark which was absent in Suprugov's. She had become somewhat foolish with age, was passionately fond of playing cards and going to the circus, and careless with her housekeeping, but in general she and her son got on excellently.

Suprugov collected books, sculptures, art dishes and Palekh work. In his study he had cabinets filled with Chinese porcelain and Venetian glassware. Not that he possessed any great understanding of Chinese porcelain, Palekh work or the poems of Verhaeren, he simply liked lovely things, and beautified his rooms with them. He attended all meetings to which he was summoned with exemplary punctuality, saw new plays, paid visits, listened to the radio, read the newspapers, and subscribed to special publications; but what he liked best was to sit at home smoking and looking over his collections.

"If you'd only get married, Pavlik!" said his mother, coming home about midnight. "You're always alone, sitting there by yourself."

But he had no wish to marry. He'd no use for women, and limited himself to compliments. He had heard enough about unhappy marriages, divorces, family troubles. . . . And venereal disease? Heaven forbid! After all, was he really so much alone? Most of his time was spent with other people. . . . Once upon a time, when he was still quite young, he had been in love. He had had two romances, and what came of it? Both had ended most unpleasantly. . . . Enough, he wanted no more of it.

"I'm not satisfied with you," said his mother frankly, looking dubiously at him. He kissed her soft white cheek, laughing. Poor Mummie, she was getting old and childish. What could she find unsatisfactory about such a son? He supplied her with everything she wanted, even tickets for the circus. And after all, it was he who had raised them from straitened circumstances. His father had been a salesman in a boot shop, and now here he was, Pavel Suprugov—a doctor, an intellectual, a connoisseur of art. People said that the Soviet regime had opened all doors. . . . But a man had to have a head on his shoulders, all the same.

He was thoroughly well satisfied with his life.

Was he equally well satisfied with himself? He would have found it hard to give a definite answer to this question. If anything, he was not. There was something wanting about him, some lack of force, but what, he did not know. He could never order, he could only request. Others commanded, and found willing obedience. How was it that so-and-so could command? Why was he obeyed?

Why could he, Suprugov, never command? And if he did venture on it—people did not jump to obey him, they were only surprised. . . Why was it that other men could argue, while he always had the irresistible urge to agree even if his mind was opposed? It was only when he got thoroughly excited that he ventured to stick to his opinion, and then only so long as nobody raised his voice. . . Why was it that other people could be blunt and outspoken to each other without offense, while he, Suprugov, was wounded by every trifle?

In order to avoid unpleasantness, he always tried to be as polite as possible, offered everybody cigarettes, and whenever he could, promised to "show himself grateful."

Others strode through life like masters; he hesitated on the threshold like an uninvited guest. Why?

He could not understand it.

For that matter, he tried not to think about it. After all, he was very well off. He had everything he wanted—a good sound profession, an assured position, a spotless reputation, not to mention those charming hobbies which added beauty to his life. What more did a man need for happiness?

From the first day of war, the world stood on its head. Everything went to the devil—the certainty, the peace, the security. This was a man accustomed to listening to life like a violin played on the other side of a wall; now it was beating a drum in his very ear.

He was mobilized! And with his poor health! What of it—he could be assigned to a hospital train. But he was no surgeon! He could not probe for bullets and lay on plaster of Paris! . . . That would be done by other folk; he would convoy the wounded and look after them on the way, see that there was no illness, that their health improved. And he need not worry—if necessary, he would even learn to extract bullets. . . .

But he did not want to be maimed! He was afraid of bombs! Afraid of suffering!

"You'll have to fight, Pavlik, there's no other way!" mumbled his mother, as she packed his things. Her head was in a whirl. He did not tell her of his terror. In those days he felt that he hated her. He hated everybody. Why did they all pretend that they were not afraid? They all knew just as well as he did about high explosive bombs, dum-dum bullets, mustard gas, and of the brutal cruelty of the enemy. How dare they pretend that they were not frightened?! How dare they laugh, talk about every-day trifles, eat ice-cream and go to the theatre when inside them everything was screaming!

But it was as though they had all agreed to keep up the pretence. They did it so well, he almost believed them. So he had to pretend too, and he pressed his cigarettes on people, talked about trifles and tried not to betray himself. But at night he could not sleep. The train was on its way to the front. Suprugov smoked endless cigarettes, while fresh grey appeared on his head. Dr. Belov talked about his former cases. Faina flirted with him. The electrician Nizvetsky came for medical advice. Suprugov replied polite-

ly to all of them, but inside him a panic-stricken animal was howling.

Sobol, the quartermaster, was tormented with doubts—should he explain the whole state of affairs to the train commandant or leave it to time to justify him, Sobol, and expose Danilov?

It was not Sobol's fault that the people on the hospital train were fed on millet porridge and consumptive-looking dietetic soups. Those were Danilov's orders. He had told Sobol:

"Listen. You just forget that you've got meat, butter, cocoa and delicacies of that kind."

"For ever?" asked Sobol. "Or perhaps you can remember them sometimes?"

"I'll tell you when it's time to remember them," Danilov promised him.

On the fourth day in the train, Dr. Belov said to Danilov with some embarrassment: "There's something wrong with the food you know. The people are grumbling. We've have to stir our quartermaster up a bit."

"The quartermaster's going along the right lines," Danilov answered. "We don't know how things are going to be in the near future, where we'll get supplies, and what kind and how much. And we shall have wounded men to feed."

And fumbling with the shaft of his polished top-boot, he concluded:

"I consider that Sobol is perfectly right."

"Yes, yes," the doctor hastily assented, embarrassed by the thought that Danilov might take him for an egoist and gourmand. "Yes, of course, we don't know where we'll get them or what they'll be. Sobol's right. . . ."

Everybody grumbled at Sobol, beginning with the quartermaster's assistant, who received the millet Sobol weighed out in the morning, and ending with Kravtsov. The latter did not condescend to any personal conversation upon the subject, but sent a message through Kostritsyn that he would smash Sobol's face if he didn't stop his damned nonsense.

That was when Sobol thought of going to Dr. Belov and making a clean breast of the whole thing. He realized full well that Kravtsov was not a man to fool with. Sobol began to haunt the doctor—he felt safer under his wing. Belov would see him several times a day—he was amused that Sobol was always busy reckoning. Rolling his eyes, Sobol would count under his breath:

"Sixty-seven times a hundred and twenty—that's 8,040 grams, say roughly eight kilograms."

He was no expert with the abacus, and multiplied and divided in his head.

But Sobol could not make up his mind to approach the doctor. He was far from sure how the political officer would regard such an attack. The political officer had cold eyes and thin, hard lips. He would not strike a man in the face, of course, but who wanted to be on bad terms with a man like that?

"Schemer," Sobol thought of Danilov. He found a way out. Choosing his moment during the dinner in the staff coach, he took a tin of meat paste, cut off a slice of butter

and shook out some sugar. "After all, what am I to do?" he whispered. He counted the lumps of sugar—forty-two. "He'll be getting so fat on that," thought Sobol and put back twelve of them—the biggest. Then, concealing everything in his pocket, he went to Kravtsov.

Kravtsov was asleep in the car, lying on the top berth. A newspaper covered his face—only his beard could be seen sticking out from under it. . . Sukhoyedov was sleeping down below. Nobody else was there. Sobol cautiously nudged Kravtsov.

"Comrade Kravtsov!" he whispered, when Kravtsov removed the newspaper from his face and looked down at him with sleep-fogged eyes. "You're wrong to get mad with me, it's absolutely not my fault."

"What do you think you're doing?" asked Kravtsov, sitting up on the shelf and regarding the supplies which Sobol was spreading out on his knees. "God, what do you think I am, a baby, to suck sugar?"

But appeased by Sobol's effort at conciliation, he forgave him.

Sobol felt easier in his mind, he even began to enjoy a feeling of importance. He started to joke with the women, a thing he had not done during the first days.

All this time the war was grinding on; the enemy was advancing into the heart of the country, his motorized troops were ranging along Russian roads, his aircraft were flying over Russian towns.

"Have you noticed?" Dr. Belov asked Danilov. "Our people are laughing. Joking. Just as though there was nothing wrong." Danilov nodded.

"Well, that's fine."

After a moment's thought, he repeated: "It's a good thing that they can joke. What's not so good is that they have no conception of the size of the calamity. Stalin spoke about it, but all the same they can't grasp it sufficiently. Here in the train, it's as though we had been locked up in jail, but without loss of civic rights."

The doctor remembered Sonechka, and his tears.

"Do you think—the suffering is so enormous?"

Danilov laughed grimly.

"What's there to think about? It's so obvious." He spoke slowly biting his lips—the very words hurt him. "The end's a long way off. Can't even see it. It's just begun yet. . . ."

"Our people, you know," said the doctor, "they'll make any sacrifices."

"What do you mean by sacrifices?" asked Danilov. "Sacrifices are made to some one, aren't they? You don't make sacrifices to yourself. What you call sacrifice, that's the people's natural reaction, yours, mine, that of these girls here. For our people, gallant deeds are no sacrifice, but just an every-day thing. For us to go on living as Soviet people, part of us may have to die today. Suppose they kill me, you, Petrov, Ivanov. Is that a sacrifice? But in that case, to whom are we sacrificed—I, you, Petrov, Ivanov? You must excuse me, maybe I don't express myself very clearly. . . ."

"No, I understand you very well," said the doctor, "and I'm inclined to agree with you. But I don't concede you the heroism. Prove that there's no heroism, nothing but some kind of natural reaction. Heroism—you know—that's human splendour, a soaring flight of the human spirit, and it's not everybody that is capable of it, it needs special qualities."

"Qualities can be developed," said Danilov. "And in this war they'll develop in such a fashion that the world will hold its breath. Those are not qualities that the good God hands out to people, they're formed by training, surroundings . . . conditions," he said, his eyes gliding angrily over the compartment, cramped as a box.

The doctor shook his head. He did not agree with Danilov, he felt that this was putting it all too simply. If Danilov was right, then anybody could become a Hero of the Soviet Union.

"In our country," said Danilov, "it's possible to make a hero out of anybody."

"We have a population of two hundred million, if I'm not mistaken," said the doctor. "How about that, two hundred million heroes?"

"Quite possible."

"Two hundred million minus one," said the doctor jokingly. "You'll not make a hero out of such an old sack as me."

"Two hundred million minus one," said Danilov. "Two hundred million minus Suprugov."

They both laughed. The serious conversation had ended in jest.

From the time when Sonechka had come to the train, one thought haunted the doctor.

He might concentrate on matters connected with his work, he might think about the situation at the front, about Suprugov, about Sobol, he could eat, sleep, write his diary, talk, joke or be annoyed—all the same, that thought held him fast and from time to time would tighten its grip as if to say—feel me! Don't forget!

This was the thought of his son.

In the evenings when the doctor was alone, he would take off his uniform that made him so hot, put on his striped summer trousers and lie down half-clothed. There might be a raid, and he couldn't run out in his underwear, with women all around!

Stretched out on the wide velvet-covered divan, he would close his eyes. And immediately his son was sitting beside him, and they were talking. (Once upon a time it used to be the other way round; the son would be lying in bed, tumbling about and playing, while the doctor sat beside him and tried to make him go to sleep.)

"Igorek," said the doctor. "How did it happen, dear lad, that we came to lose each other?"

Once there had been a little boy, a lovely little boy.

When he was two years old, he had climbed up the ladder left by some men doing repairs, and made his way to the roof. The children playing in the yard called Sonechka, she looked out of the window and saw

Igor sitting on the very edge, dangling his legs. Sonechka gasped, she felt faint. . . A neighbour climbed up after him, but he jumped up and ran towards the chimney; he was caught, he screamed and kicked—he did not want to come down.

The neighbour said he ought to be well spanked, to teach him not to go climbing about in such places. But Sonechka only kissed her boy, and when the doctor came home and heard about it, he did the same; just think—a toddler of two years old. . .

A year later. The doctor was walking along Karpovka—they lived there at the time, in Writers' Street. He was holding one of Igor's hands, and Lyalya had the other. She was seven, no, eight at the time. Suddenly a dog dashed out of a side street and began barking. Lyalya dropped Igor's hand and hid behind her father's back, but Igor pulled away, ran up to the dog and began barking back at it—Bow-wow! And the startled dog turned tail and ran back again. . .

He was not yet wearing trousers, he had a blue frock and a pinafore, and his hair was wavy like a girl's. . .

A brave boy, a splendid boy.

Danilov said that courage comes from training. Perhaps, perhaps. But who had taught courage to that two-year-old Igor? No, that was something different. Perhaps there are two kinds of courage—one acquired, the other innate.

Not that it mattered, after all. What was important was that Igor, his son, had been plucky from the day he was born. And not only plucky. Sensitive, fine . . . in general, something quite unusual. . .

"We'll have wash day tomorrow," people would say at home. "We must buy some soda, we'll have wash day tomorrow."

And the next day the woman came to wash, so Igor decided in his own mind that her name must be Wash Day, which was what he proceeded to call her—Auntie Wash Day. He would hop about beside her and peer into the tub—all full of froth and bubbles!

Once Wash Day brought her little girl, who was three years older than Igor. The child taught him to play naughts and crosses, and Igor adored her, he hugged and kissed her all the time. Sonechka began to be jealous, and asked:

"Whom do you love most, Lida or me?"

"Lida, of course," he replied.

But later on, toys began to disappear. Sonechka said nothing, she did not want to make her son unhappy. But at last she had to speak.

"Igorek, Lida's not a good girl," she said. "You're so fond of her, and all the same she steals all your nicest toys."

He said nothing, but went into the dining room, sat down on the big divan with his legs tucked up under him, and stayed there for a long time. His eyes, as Sonechka said later, were full of surprise and grief.

Then he slid down from the divan, went to Sonechka and said:

"Don't say that she's stolen the things. Let's say that I've given them to her, shall we? And let her keep on coming."

The next time Lida came, Sonechka heard

Igor say to her as soon as they were alone "Take my toys if you like. Take anything you want. All of them. I don't want them."

What a boy, what a boy. . .

When he was six, he took some money from his mother's purse, without telling her. He had beautiful curls, pale gold. Sonechka was proud of them and would not have them clipped. He begged to have them cut off, because the other boys in the yard used to tease him and call him a little sissy, but Sonechka with maternal vanity and egoism, replied:

"Don't take any notice of them, they don't know what they're talking about. Keep them for another year, just one year more!"

Suddenly one day he disappeared from the yard, and turned up again, his head clipped and smelling of eau-de-cologne.

"Where did you get that done?" asked Sonechka, staring wide-eyed at his face, which seemed suddenly to have become plainer and coarser.

She was ready to cry.

"At the barber's," he replied. "I gave him three rubles, and he squirted scent all over me."

"But where did you get the three rubles?"

"I took them from your purse," he answered.

"Why did you take them?" she asked in horror. "That's stealing, you should have asked me, I'd have given them to you."

He shook his head.

"No, you wouldn't. You wouldn't have given them to me."

She did not hide him any more, but stroked his velvety boyish bullet head, and wept for his curls, and kissed and kissed him—with a mother's boundless unreasoning love.

At school, the young teacher also spoiled him. He used to boast.

"All the other boys sit and do their sums, and I go round the class and see how they are doing them."

"And don't you do any sums?"

"Mine are done first."

"But why does the teacher let you walk about the classroom?"

"Because she likes me," he answered.

How did it happen that his son began to slip out of his heart?

A time came when the doctor began to be irritated by that senseless over-indulgence, that atmosphere of adoration surrounding Igor at home.

When Sonechka came home from work she would sit up until three o'clock in the morning doing Igor's drawings because he was too lazy to do them himself, and the next day they had to be handed in. Disgraceful!

The boy went to school just when it suited him. Who ever heard of such a thing? A very often it did not suit him. He would come home from the skating rink or the picture when it was nearly midnight, and naturally in the morning, he did not want to get up. And his mother—outrageous!—would send a note to the school saying that he had a headache.

What was she trying to make of Igor? prince or a tramp?

The doctor was resentful on Lyalya's account.

count. The girl worked excellently at school, she was merry, affectionate—a delightful child. And she never received one-half the love that was lavished upon Igor.

Lyalya would meet her father at the door and cry "Daddy's come!" so that it could be heard all over the flat, and jump about, and kiss him. But Igor never appeared until dinner time, and then he would come in scowling and tousled, sprawl in his seat and answer rudely when rebuked.

But Sonechka turned a deaf ear to all remonstrances.

He could not quarrel with Sonechka. Sonechka was Sonechka. She was something sacred, she must not be touched. But everything about Igor irritated him. The way he sat! The way he answered his mother! How little affection he showed, how cold he was, almost supercilious. . . .

A time came when the doctor could no longer contain himself, even in Igor's presence.

They were having boiled beef for dinner. Lyalya liked to suck the marrow from the bones; Igor liked the same thing. And for some reason, it was always Igor who seemed to get the bones. This time too.

"And is there any reason," said the doctor quietly, "why Lyalya shouldn't have the marrow bone today—just by way of an exception?"

Sonechka pretended not to have heard. Lyalya—dear child!—said gaily:

"Why, don't worry, Daddy! Let Igorek have it, I'm big now!"

Igor raised his eyes from his plate and looked thoughtfully and cynically (yes, cynically!) into his father's face. . . . And then he calmly began digging the marrow out of the bone. The doctor sat there flushed, smouldering. . . .

From that day, Igor began to avoid him. Yes, he began to avoid his father—evidently he had drawn some conclusion from this incident. But after all, the boy was only fifteen years old. . . . And the doctor did not seek him out, did not thrash it all out. Oh dear, oh dear. How stupid, petty, clumsy. What a terrible misunderstanding, all at cross purposes. . . .

The day when he left—the doctor remembered it now—Igor had at first kept in the background, but then he suddenly came forward and stood beside his father. And when they all said goodbye, Igor bent down to him, looked hard into his face and said in a firm, expressionless voice: "Goodbye, Dad." And there was something new in his eyes, something sharp and piercing. . . . Was that farewell? Pardon? Conciliation? What was it? . . . That was the time when he should have embraced Igor and said: "Igorek, my own boy, everything that has come between us—it's all wiped out for ever, there's a clean page before us and we'll fill it together, you and I. . . ."

"Igorek, everything that was between us was false, it's the present that's the real truth, and we are facing that truth together, you and I. . . ."

Chapter IV

Julia Dmitriyevna

"Sister Smirnova's forgotten to stop up the needle," said Julia Dmitriyevna to the matron, Faina, and pursed up her thin lips significantly.

Faina was fully taken up with her own thoughts and affairs—she was standing in front of the mirror on the door, binding a turban of muslin round her head. She glanced carelessly at the syringe, which Julia Dmitriyevna was holding solemnly out to her as evidence.

"But why did you give her the syringe?"

"She gave the electrician an injection. He's in great pain with hemorrhoids. Dr. Suprugov ordered pantapon injections."

Faina frowned. She was repelled by unpleasant sicknesses. Only two days previously she had been thinking that the electrician Nizvetsky was quite a handsome young man. And now haemorrhoids, of all things. Nizvetsky ceased to exist, so far as Faina was concerned.

"This train—it's like a collection of old people and invalids," she said.

But Julia Dmitriyevna was not to be turned from her subject.

"If a nurse forgets to put the stopper in the needle, she'll never be any good, that I assure you."

Faina completed her headdress, preened herself, turned to Julia Dmitriyevna, and

again thought with horror how ugly the theatre sister was. She really was dreadful, poor thing!

"You upset yourself too much over every trifle," said Faina affectionately. "You should spare your nerves, we've got hard times ahead."

Julia Dmitriyevna raised her brows. Actually, there were no brows, only two puffy red crescents with something like toothbrush bristles growing along them.

"Things like that aren't trifles. Don't you know that the needle can rust without the stopper?"

"I know!" Faina answered with a gush of womanly sympathy. "But you mustn't let it upset you like this, dear. Honestly, it's not worth it."

The toothbrushes rose still higher.

"And who else will get upset? It's my duty to be upset about it!"

"She's crazy," thought Faina. The gush of sympathy had ebbed, and she felt bored.

"I would be much obliged, Faina Vassilyevna, if you, for your part would give Sister Smirnova a reprimand. If this sort of thing goes on, we shan't be able to trust her with anything from the dispensary."

"All right, I'll tell her," said Faina, already irritated, and went out.

"Gone to show herself in her turban," Julia Dmitriyevna correctly guessed.

Julia Dmitriyevna remained alone. She looked around her shining little kingdom with a feeling of pleasure. Everything there, everything in its place. Here—the instruments for operations on bones, there—those for tracheotomy. In the cupboard—sterilized overalls. In the box—sterilized swabs. Rather cramped—with three people in the compartment, there was no room to turn round. But to make up for that, everything was handy. Julia Dmitriyevna's soul was filled with a sense of satisfaction.

And what forethought! According to regulations, operations were not performed in the train, the dispensary was only for dressings. But nevertheless, all the instruments were there, nothing forgotten, any operation could be performed if necessary, even to trepanning. Yes, this was a place where one could work. It would be a pleasure to work here! The political officer was a good man to have, and the doctors were very pleasant, especially Suprugov.

Julia Dmitriyevna was in love with Suprugov.

She was always in love with somebody. When she found herself in a new place, she always looked about and decided within herself: "There, I'm going to fall in love with that one." And immediately proceeded to do so.

In the town hospital she had been in love with Professor Skuderevsky, with whom she had worked for fourteen years. He had grown old before her eyes, received two Orders, begun and finished an important piece of work on the removal of cancerous growths, fallen ill with Malta fever and recovered—and all the time she had loved him.

Three or four times she had been faithless to the professor, when she had been attracted by young assistants. But the old devotion had risen triumphant, and she had returned to him, berating herself for her fickleness.

He suspected nothing of all this. Nor did the assistants. Nobody thought of Julia Dmitriyevna as a woman, and Professor Skuderevsky would have been thunderstruck to learn that she was in love with him. Nobody ever talked intimately with her.

Once the professor said:

"A good thing you're not married." (Nobody had ever told him so—it was perfectly obvious.)

Her heart leapt. (Although she knew that he was married—he had recently celebrated his silver wedding, and had grandchildren.)

"Why?" she asked.

"I couldn't work with a married sister," he said. "A theatre sister should devote herself wholly to her work."

As she walked home that evening along the empty dark boulevard, she was repeating that short conversation to herself. She told herself that she had sacrificed her personal life for the sake of suffering humanity. No, that was not right, for his sake, Professor Skuderevsky's, she had renounced marriage and motherhood. It was sweeter and sadder, put like that. For his sake. For the love of him. . . .

On the Finnish front she fell in love with the brigade doctor. But the Finnish campaign

was a short one, and that love passed like a dream.

In the hospital train, Julia Dmitriyevna hesitated for some time between Danilov, the commandant and Suprugov.

Danilov was the first one she turned down. "Not sensitive enough," Julia Dmitriyevna decided.

The commandant had traits similar to the unforgettable Professor Skuderevsky—grey hair, bags under the eyes, a pleasant voice.

"No," thought Julia Dmitriyevna, "war-time there should be only official relations with the commandant."

That left Suprugov.

Her love didn't interfere with anything. She worked indefatigably, slept soundly and ate enough for four.

If anybody had offered her a husband handsome, young and loving, on condition that she gave up her work, she would have raised her brows and answered:

"No."

Her work was her life, her heart, her hands. Her work gave her that place in life which nature had denied her. To be without her work would have meant to lose heart and hands, it would have meant to cease living.

She understood very well that love was not for her, that she would only be a pitiful object of ridicule, if anybody knew her feelings. She was proud, and did not betray herself. All those little womanly illusions were hidden deep, deep down, under several seals, in the farthest corner of her very healthy heart.

Julia Dmitriyevna's parents were very ordinary, average people, of very ordinary average appearance. It was a mystery how both their sons should have turned out young Apollos, and their daughter Julia, the only one, so long-awaited—hopelessly ugly. At first the mother felt it keenly, and prayed every night that some of her sons' good looks might be transferred to the ill-favoured daughter. Then she became accustomed to it. Later as the years passed, she even began to find that Julia was not so bad after all. The father would turn the pages in the family album and study the faces of all relatives, near and distant, trying to guess from whom Julia might have inherited such a distressing appearance. In the end he found what he sought. The culprit was a great-grandfather—a Greek, a baker from Nizhni-Novgorod.

"I remember him," said Julia's father. "They used to wheel him about in a chair, and he was always playing patience. They would put a tray on his knees, and he would lay out his cards on it. He lived to be a hundred and four. A marvellously handsome old man."

"Handsome?" repeated the mother. "And Julia's like him?"

"Believe it or not, she is."

The mother shook her head thoughtfully.

"I didn't know that she had Greek blood."

Greek blood lent a certain exoticism and mystery to the family sorrow. Yes, Julia was not pretty, but what could you do—Greek blood!

Unfortunately, one could not go up to every man and whisper the explanation to

him. And men were not very kind to poor Julia. If only one of them had paid the least little bit of attention to her, just once! But they wanted too much. They did not understand what a treasure that girl was.

Nothing of this was ever discussed, of course. The family considered itself above that. The father was an assistant doctor, very fond of abusing the young doctors. According to him, he, the assistant, was the only person in whom the patients had any confidence.

The sons also followed Aesculapius—one became a pharmacist, the other a veterinary surgeon. Both were as handsome as young Greek gods. They were too successful with the girls to have time to finish college, but as the years passed, they became more settled, married handsome and jealous wives, had children, regretted their wasted youth and envied their father.

Julia Dmitriyevna had now been working for twenty-two years as theatre sister.

She looked down on her family. Her elder brothers scatterbrained, with many children, felt like boys in her presence. They had their weaknesses; they made a good many mistakes; even when their heads became grey, there were many things about which they had no exact, definite views.

Julia Dmitriyevna had no weaknesses (for one cannot count those buried under seven seals), she had never made a mistake in her life and had fixed opinions about everything.

The family recognized all this, and looked up to her.

Both in the hospital and in the surgery, it was Julia Dmitriyevna, and not Professor Skuderevsky, who was the authority. The whole staff realized this and feared every twitch of her brows far more than the professor's violent outbreaks. Once, when Julia Dmitriyevna had influenza, the professor refused to perform a complicated operation until she had recovered. And this confirmed the staff in their opinion that Julia Dmitriyevna might manage to get on without the professor, but the professor was helpless without Julia Dmitriyevna.

The dispensary door opened with a sharp jerk. Suprugov entered.

"They're taking us right into the thick of the bombs," he said.

"I don't know anything about that," said Julia Dmitriyevna, rather coldly.

"Have a good look at that forest," he said. "Maybe we'll never see it again."

His eyes filled with tears. Julia Dmitriyevna sighed. She had no fear of bombs, she had been at the front in the Finnish campaign. But it was pleasant to have him standing there beside her, talking to her. Her sigh was one of love.

"Look, look!" cried Suprugov.

There was a break in the forest, and between its dark wings a road could be seen, shrouded in a haze of dust. It was crowded with endless columns of troops, slowly moving guns, a dense column of canvas-covered lorries. A horseman was galloping along the ditch at the side, overtaking the lorries. All this flashed into sight for a moment and then disappeared behind the forest again.

"Retreating," said Suprugov, wringing his hands. "And we're going to the place they're leaving."

"I don't see that they're retreating," Julia Dmitriyevna contradicted him. "How can you tell? It may be just an ordinary regrouping of troops. We can't understand these things."

"We know that they're beating us," said Suprugov, raising his voice, "all the communiqués speak of it, and you try to look as though everything in the garden's lovely. But if anybody asks you why you do it, you yourself can't tell them. . . ."

Why had he raised his voice? He had never before raised his voice to anybody—he had not dared. Why did he feel that he could raise his voice to her?

"I don't think in the least that everything's lovely," she answered calmly. "I simply said that they might be regrouping, and not retreating. You can't prove that it's a retreat."

Her mouth closed obstinately. She did not want to give way, not even for love of him.

Julia Dmitriyevna stood in the dispensary looking out of the window. So this was the land which the enemy was going to take—Pskov. She knew Pskov. She had relations living there, and had stayed with them when she had been a girl. She had driven from the station in a cab, because there had been no trams then; now they probably had them. The lindens had been in bloom, and there was a honey-like perfume everywhere. It was evening, with a dark warm sky and church bells ringing, slowly, majestically. . . . Her aunt used to say: "We're Pskov people," as though there was nobody to compare with Pskov people in the whole of Russia. What was it like now, Pskov? Like that roofless cottage? Like that smoking village? It was standing there, defaced by bombs; the troops were leaving, and it was standing and smoking, scarred with trenches. . . .

But Julia Dmitriyevna did not see Pskov.

For a long time the train was shunted over a criss-crossed tangle of rails; there were long freight trains on either side, the rattle and rumble deafened them, and the windows were dark with smoke. Sometimes the black clouds would clear, and then the sky could be seen, an angry red from the glare of burning buildings. Then the train halted. Julia Dmitriyevna called the nurse.

"Klava! Go to the staff coach and find out where the commandant and commissar are."

It worried her to be standing there doing nothing, when it was quite obvious that there must be people all around who were needing help.

"Aren't there any orders?"

"Just a moment, Julia Dmitriyevna. I'll get out and run along outside, shall I?"

"Don't you know the regulations—that nobody leaves the train? Go through the coaches."

Klava went. A train standing before the dispensary windows began to move. For a long time its sealed coaches kept flashing by—away from the town—and then it was

one. Another train was standing on the next line, but all the same, it was lighter in the coach; now tongues of flame were visible somewhere beyond—first one, then another would flare raggedly into that ominous red sky. . . The hospital train, too, began to move—closer to the station; it came out into the lurid light of the fires, and then stood there, alone, fearlessly exposed, with its red crosses on the roofs. Fires were raging to right and left.

Klava came back.

"Well, what are they doing there?"

"Julia Dmitriyevna, the commandant said that you should not go anywhere. The political officer has gone to the evacuation point for orders."

"And where does he think I'd be likely to go?" Julia Dmitriyevna enquired loftily.

Again the train began to move. It was now quite close to the station. Everything around was burning and nobody was making any attempt to put out the fires. People were running about everywhere. There were four men standing at the edge of the platform—three civilians with suitcases, and Danilov.

"Surgeons!" Klava reported, after running to the staff coach on her own initiative. "The casualty clearing station has sent us three surgeons, they're going to operate here."

Surgeons! Julia Dmitriyevna's heart burned with anticipation of the real work to come. Therapy—what was that? . . . From Julia Dmitriyevna's point of view it was not so much medical science as chiromancy. But now real medical science was entering the coach in the person of these civilians with their suitcases. Operations in the train, first dressings.

She arranged everything quickly. Three surgeons—three tables. One in the dispensary, two in the washroom. Instruments—sufficient. Overalls, gloves—sufficient. Who would assist? First of all, of course, she herself, Julia Dmitriyevna. Then—Suprugov. No, his nerves were weak. Assistant Army Doctor Olga Mikhailovna—second, Faina Vassilyevna—third.

"Klava! Draw the blackout curtains on the washroom window. Lights on. Take those shades off the lamps. Wash the table with permanganate."

Crash! A dispensary window blown in by a bomb. Glass splinters scattered about the coach.

Klava crossed herself. She had never done such a thing in her life before, but now she did it, quite involuntarily.

Julia Dmitriyevna looked at her scornfully.

"Klava! I'll wash the table myself. You clear away the glass."

The real work was beginning.

In half an hour, there was not one unbroken window in the whole dispensary coach.

The nurses cleared away the glass. They were frightened, and two of the girls began to cry. But what hurt everybody most was that the Germans should be spoiling such a lovely coach.

"How I've worked to keep it nice!" said

Klava softly, as she swept splinters into an iron shovel.

The buxom Iya could not stand it. She broke the rules and ran out of the train. A bomb crater beyond the burning station seemed to her the most secure refuge. They forgot about her, and the next day she came back, black with dust, with clods of earth in her hair and scorched eyelashes.

Danilov gathered a first-aid group—nurses, sisters, orderlies, soldiers. Nizvetsky appeared.

"I'm coming with you," he said.

"And what about the light?" asked Danilov.

"Kravtsov'll keep an eye on it. He understands it. It gets dark late now."

"No, today we won't be able to make out with daylight. We'll be having operations."

"Kravtsov. . . ."

"Nothing to do with Kravtsov. Kravtsov's the engineer, and the electrician—that's you. You'll have to stay here."

"Well, I'm not staying, whatever you say," said Faina. "I'm for the front, for the field, neither bombs nor shells'll touch me."

Danilov smiled involuntarily at her boasting.

"I can't take you, Faina Vassilyevna, the commandant's assigned you to the surgical department."

"Damn!" said Faina. "My luck's out. Here, you take my satchel," she said to Lena Ogorodnikova, who was standing on the platform, her hands behind her back, her boyish head thrown back. "You take it, you're a fine kid, ready for anything."

"Now, doctor," Danilov said to Suprugov. "All Europe's watching us."

Suprugov was holding the rail as though he could not tear himself from it. . . He turned a dead face to Danilov. He began to say something—when suddenly there was an explosion close to the line, and a cloud of fine coal dust descended on the two men.

Suprugov suddenly seemed to realize things. "Finital!" he said, and went down the steps.

Danilov took his hand, and Suprugov ran with him, stamping with his heavy boots. It was sultry, and his eyes smarted from the smoke. . . A soldier was coming along the street outside the station, dragging his rifle after him. He left a track of blood, and the trailing rifle smeared it over the dust.

"Is it far to the hospital train?" he asked. "They told me to go to the hospital train."

"There it is, the other side of the hut, you can see it from here," Danilov replied.

"Can you get there alone or do you want a stretcher?"

"I can go alone," the soldier replied. "You'll be needing all your stretchers."

Round the corner a boy of about fourteen was lying, quite conscious; he did not groan, but watched the approaching orderlies with grim, burning eyes.

"Stretcher!" said Danilov, while Lena bent down and raised the boy as though he were a child. He suddenly shuddered convulsively, his head dropped back and he lost consciousness.

"Don't push yourself forward, if you don't know how," said Sukhoyedov angrily. "You're not playing with dolls. Put him on the stretcher, what are you standing there staring for?"

A rending, tearing howl and an explosion nearby. A dark cloud covered the group.

Then it began to disperse.

"Everybody all right?" asked Danilov after a moment's silence.

Yes, everybody was all right, only blackened and deafened.

The black Suprugov smiled wildly.

"Take the lad to Julia Dmitriyevna," Danilov told Sukhoyedov and Medvedyev. "And we'll go on. You can catch up with us later, and if you don't, pick up anyone you find and take them to the train."

"What was that?" asked Suprugov as they were going along the street. "A shell or a mine?"

"A mine. Why?"

Suprugov coughed and spat out black saliva. His tunic was torn on the shoulder.

"Eh, what's that!" said Danilov. "Did a splinter get you?"

"What? Where? Ah, here? That's nothing. It's just a scratch. A trifle, nothing to talk about."

He was like a drunken man. He was staggered. Staggered by the consciousness of his own reckless courage.

Dr. Belov was walking through the train.

A hot wind was blowing in through the open windows of the empty coaches. The flickering, surging smoky light from outside lighted the whole train. Only today these coaches had looked so comfortable. . . .

In every carriage a soldier and a nurse, scared and inexperienced.

The general coach was empty. All except those on duty had gone with Danilov.

"I've forgotten something," thought the doctor as he walked along the train. "I've forgotten something. . . ."

But what it was he could not tell.

Everything seemed ready, everything foreseen. The surgeons were ruling the dispensary, it was their job. A group had gone to fetch wounded. Danilov could be depended upon. . . . Yes, food. Supper would have to be prepared for the people. And breakfast in the morning.

"Sister Smirnova, send somebody for the quartermaster."

Sobol appeared. The doctor glanced at him with an involuntary fleeting curiosity—was he adding up or not? No, Sobol was not making any calculations; he was trembling and seemed to have shrunk, like a balloon when the air leaks out.

"Well," said the doctor, "we'll have to prepare some supper, you know. Now let's see,"—he thought for a moment. "For a hundred and twenty, yes. A good supper."

"Supper's over," Sobol stammered.

"A good one, you know," the doctor repeated, ignoring the objection. "And taking the wounded into consideration, they'll be arriving from today on. None of your tasteless millet, but good whole meal porridge, with jam, say, and coffee, and biscuits, and butter—you understand?"

"Butter?" Sobol repeated, wondering if he was dreaming.

"Yes. Fifty grams a head."

"Fifty," Sobol whispered, rolling his eyes to the ceiling. "Fifty times a hundred and twenty, that's six thousand—six kilograms. . . ."

"There's something I've forgotten," thought the doctor, when he had finished with Sobol.

"Something I've forgotten, forgotten. . . ."

And suddenly he remembered.

Why had he done nothing to find Igor? Surely there was something that could be done. Telephone. Write an application. Enquire somewhere, ask somebody. . . . Absurd, madness—where could he telephone, where could he enquire, whom could he ask. . . . No, no, something could have been done, no doubt about that. It was just that he didn't know how to set about it. Sonechka would have managed it. He was incompetent, he was never competent in such matters. Sonechka would have found a way because she loved Igor. Real love is always ingenious, it can do anything. He did not love Igor enough, he had always loved him too little, he was a useless, neglectful, incapable father. He loved Lyalya more. And why was she any better? Nothing but curls, operettas and flirtation in her head. Just good at getting round one. . . . She'd make sweet eyes at him, and he would give her money for the theatre, but when Igor asked him for something, he refused. A miserable thirty rubles. . . . My own boy, forgive me. Take everything, take my old worn-out life, only live! Only come back! Only don't go away like that, so suddenly, my boy.

When Julia Dmitriyevna left home for the army, both her brothers came to see her off with their wives and children and all their relations. There was a great baking of cakes, and churning of the ice-cream freezer, just as though it were a birthday party and Julia Dmitriyevna herself had moved the table and spread the best white cloth on it. That had been twelve days ago. And now again she was moving tables and spreading white cloths over them.

The first wounded man arrived—a soldier. He stocked his rifle in the corner and looked about him in a businesslike manner.

"Which table shall I lie down on?" he asked.

You could see at a glance that this was a veteran who knew his way about.

"Whichever you like," Julia Dmitriyevna answered benevolently. "But take your clothes off first. Where are you wounded? Leg? Klava! Cut his boot off!"

She herself was standing and holding an overall ready for the professor to slip into when he had finished washing. He had white, slightly puffy professorial hands, like Professor Skuderevsky's. The washroom window was covered, and blindingly bright lamps shone over the table. It never entered anybody's head that it was senseless to cover this light when the whole train was plainly visible in the bright glare of the fires.

Klava cut the wounded man's boot off and turned away in horror.

"Well, what's up with you? What's wrong,

eh? Not used to it yet?" said the soldier, frowning. "It's only a flea-bite, if you want to know—the bone isn't even touched."

Julia Dmitriyevna fastened the professor's overall, poured spirit over his pink palms and handed him the gloves. The handsome old man, rather like an actor, looked in perplexity at her satisfied face. . . .

But in two minutes he understood her. Here was the born nurse, who regarded the profession as a sacred duty. He never had to ask her for anything. She handed him everything he needed, anticipated his wishes before he himself realized them.

The wounded soldier bore the dressing unflinchingly, without a single groan, only occasionally letting out his breath in a loud: "F-f-fu!" Julia Dmitriyevna adored such patients. She could not stand whiners. She was hearing nothing of the roar about her, she was completely absorbed in what she was doing. The only thing that troubled her was the heat, the coach was unbearably stuffy, and the ventilators seemed barely to stir the air. With the pincers she took a swab and wiped the sweat from the wounded man's face.

"Thank you," said the soldier.

A boy was brought in with a shattered tibia, unconscious. He had splendidly developed muscles—probably he had been a footballer, or a cyclist. . . . She saw at a glance that the leg would have to be amputated, saw it even before the professor did.

"Those damned ruffians," said Faina, looking at the boy.

The lad's chin was trembling, and he was grinding his teeth. . . . The professor asked Julia Dmitriyevna:

"Can you give chloroform?"

Could she give chloroform! To be perfectly frank, she could have performed the amputation as well. The only reason why she did not attempt it was the lack of formal right to do so.

She laid the chloroform mask on the lad's face. . . . When the rasping of the saw cutting through the bone was heard, Faina went to the window, turned her face away and wept.

During the operation Dr. Belov came in.

"Do you need me?" he asked.

Julia Dmitriyevna gave him a threatening look. He approached timidly, stretching out his neck to look at the wounded. . . . A woman was lying on the other table in the washroom.

"The boy to number eleven in the Krieger," the doctor told Sister Smirnova, who had entered with him. "The woman. . . ."

"No need to place the woman," said Olga Mikhailovna, the assistant doctor, who was at the second table. She removed the mask from the woman's face. A broad, Slav face with rather high cheekbones. Sable brows. A beautiful mouth. A line of brown freckles crossing the nose.

"Too late," said the surgeon.

Suddenly he was hurled against the other table, where the boy lay, the boy was flung to the floor, and everybody staggered and fell except Julia Dmitriyevna, who shot across to the door and grasped the towel hanger. Flakes of white paint floated from the walls and ceiling. A piece of the frame broke off,

and scratched Julia Dmitriyevna's temple with its sharp corner.

"That was very close," said Dr. Belov.

"Very," Julia Dmitriyevna agreed, lifting the boy. "I think it must have been a direct hit on our train."

Kostritsyn and Medvedyev came running into the dispensary coach from opposite ends shouting:

"Coach fourteen's on fire! Where's the commandant?"

The commandant was already down on the rails, running as fast as his legs would carry him to the burning coach.

It was blazing fiercely—dry wood, dry paint. Fortunate that there were no wounded there yet. Was everybody safe? There was Nadya—stooping down, spitting blood. . . . There was blood on her overall.

"Nadya, what's the matter—are you wounded?"

"Why, of course not, Comrade Commander I cut my lip against the shelf."

"And Kostritsyn's alive?"

"He's all right, he went to fetch you."

Here he was, running up, with a bucket of water in his hand—what use was a bucket here? And Medvedyev after him.

From the opposite direction came Kravtsov and Nizvetsky, walking along as though tomorrow would do.

"Quick, lads, quick!" cried the doctor.

Nizvetsky began to double! Kravtsov continued at the same pace, sauntering up, hands in pockets.

"Help carry water, lads," said the doctor.

"Call everybody, we'll all throw it on the coach."

"Where's the water, then?" asked Kravtsov gruffly.

"Water? There's water in the tanks. There's water in the engine. . . ."

"That's a trickle, not water," said Kravtsov and suddenly roared at the soldiers:

"Hit! Uncouple the coach! There's the dynamo right alongside, and those fools standing there with their mouths open! Here, friend," he added, catching a passing oiler by the sleeve. "Lend us a hand, you know the job. We've got to get that coach uncoupled."

"Like hell I will!" said the greaser. "Hundreds of coaches gone, and I'm to worry about uncoupling some bit of a thing like that."

"It's absolutely necessary, friend," said Kravtsov. "There's wounded here, there's a dynamo here. There's no other way, it's got to be uncoupled."

"You go to the devil! Fancy uncoupling a coach with bombs falling," said the oiler.

"I'll give you the devil," roared Kravtsov, his eyes blazing, and punched the oiler on the ear. The doctor stood there, rooted to the spot with the unexpectedness of it all. . . . The oiler retaliated by kicking Kravtsov in the stomach, and Kravtsov hit him again on the back of the neck. The oiler cursed again, and crawled under to uncouple the burning coach. The conductor appeared from somewhere, his clothing stained with earth—he had probably been lying in some nearby shellhole. They pushed the burning coach

further away, and began throwing water from the engine over it.

Meanwhile, Julia Dmitriyevna was standing beside the table, handing instruments and swabs to the professor. She prepared the men for operation. . . The whole night the town was under fire and the whole night wounded kept coming in. Some were brought on stretchers, some on lories, others walked in themselves. . . Towards morning the professor's strength gave out.

"That's enough," he said, and tore the fastenings of his overall apart, without waiting to undo them. "I'm all in. Been at it five days and nights. . ."

Faina took him to the staff coach to rest. She told Julia Dmitriyevna that she'd take the chance to go to her own compartment and change at the same time, her stomach was rising with the smell of blood, and all her underwear was wet with perspiration. . .

"I'm done too," said the other surgeon, a small black-haired man with a lemon-yellow face, and disappeared. Olga Mikhailovna lay down right there on the divan in the washroom. "For a second, just for a second!" she said like a child and fell asleep before the words were out of her mouth. There remained a young surgeon with his fair hair *en brosse*, a nose like a rudder, and taller than Danilov.

"Well?" he asked, looking at Julia Dmitriyevna.

"Well!" she replied with approval, and went over to his table.

They worked together in silence. The coach shook and trembled with the bombardment, but they worked with never a thought of whether this night would come to an end, if morning would come soon, if they would be able to rest. . . As he worked, the young doctor whistled something, barely audibly, between his teeth—something beautiful; Julia Dmitriyevna liked it.

Olga Mikhailovna wakened after two hours, jumped up and ran to rouse the others. The first to return was Faina, fresh as a rose, then the old professor.

"And you're still on your feet!" he said rather apologetically to Julia Dmitriyevna, as he washed up.

She did not reply—she was counting the swabs which the young doctor had taken from the engine he had been exploring, and only indicated to Faina with a movement of her brows that she should give the professor his overall.

All morning wounded were brought to the train and carried in. The beds filled. Sobol prepared breakfast for three hundred. Dr. Belov ordered dinner for five hundred. . . The nurses were no longer carrying the buckets out to the shell-holes, they emptied the blood right onto the lines.

At midday Danilov entered the staff coach.

"Well, how's it going? Taken on enough?" he asked.

"I'm afraid we have," replied the doctor. "Even the staff coach is full now. We're putting them on the floor, and we can be rapped over the knuckles for that."

They went through the train. The coaches were crowded; they smelt of antiseptic and perspiration, and flies were everywhere.

There were many slight cases. They had come on foot and remained in the train so as to have a chance of leaving the town. Most of these were civilians. One woman, with a shattered shoulder-blade, had brought four children with her—Faina pushed them into her own compartment. All this was contrary to rules and regulations, but that night, somehow, everybody forgot about rules and regulations, and remembered only the common suffering of Russian people, and the need to find a way out through common effort.

The doctor again looked over all the beds—how many times he had already done so. All the time he was thinking—suppose Igor should be here. . . But there was no Igor.

"Ivan Egorych," said the doctor. "You ought to lie down, my dear fellow. You've been working like a Trojan all night, you can't go on like that."

The doctor himself had not slept, he had been running about, making arrangements for the wounded, and putting out the fire; apart from a tiny glass of vodka which Kravtsov had given him, nothing had passed his lips. But the doctor felt that he was the only one doing nothing, and that miserable glass of vodka seemed to him the direct offense, against human and military ethics. If only Danilov did not find out about that vodka. . .

"I've an idea," said Danilov. "There are abandoned trains here with valuable loads. They'll be burned. We could very well take one of them with us."

"How?"

"Why, with our engine. Couple it on behind. I've spoken to the local transport officer, and he's very pleased."

Danilov thought that the doctor would be equally glad. But the doctor looked at him, blinking his weary eyes, and seemed in no hurry to answer.

"Excuse me, Ivan Egorych," he said at last. "But it seems to me this isn't a thing to be settled offhand. You must understand that I'm a doctor first and foremost, and I'm responsible for the lives of my patients. If this extra weight affects the movement of the train, I shall be unable to agree."

He spoke very mildly, but there was something in his blinking eyes that Danilov understood; the commandant was beginning to feel himself a commandant. Danilov reddened, he wanted to say: "You're not only a doctor, you're a Soviet citizen, and it's your duty to save State property!" But the doctor, as though forestalling him, said:

"We shall make up for the value, you know. After all, our load is the most valuable thing there is, isn't it?"

They met Julia Dmitriyevna erect and triumphant, only a little paler than usual. There were uneven trickles of dried blood on her temples.

The doctor saluted her. She bowed condescendingly and went past.

"And that," said the doctor, looking after her, "that, I think, is the most valuable thing in the train."

"And who discovered her?" thought Danilov, "I did! You came and found everything ready for you, and now you're giving your orders!"

But he understood that it was wartime, and this was the commandant of his unit. He said nothing.

Suprugov had returned to the train with Danilov.

He too had been going about the town all night under fire, giving first aid to the wounded. Actually, he was not robust enough for such work. He had been living on his nerves. He had not even started when a shell burst near him; he seemed to see himself as though it were somebody else whom he was watching from some immense height. And as though from this same height he saw the pleasing picture—a doctor returning from the battlefield, where every second had brought danger of death or mutilation. The brave doctor's tunic was torn on the shoulder by a shell splinter, he was deathly weary, he was black as a Negro, his puttees and the knees of his breeches were soaked with blood, the feet were chafed by his boots. . . But he pulled himself up the handrail jauntily and went into the staff coach. Fima, the kitchen maid, shrank away from him. . .

"Hot water!" he called to her as he passed. "And a clean overall, and get this one washed today."

Fima looked at Suprugov, her eyes round with devotion, and ran for water. . .

"Smirnova!" Suprugov called from the compartment to the sister hurrying along the corridor. "Tell the supply sister to send me some breakfast."

He stripped off his tunic. Smirnova glanced into the compartment, saw his blackened head, his arms blood-stained to the elbows, shrank back and ran to the kitchen.

"Aha, got them running about!" Suprugov said to himself.

Stripped to the waist, his braces dangling, he went to wash, deliberately half-clad. Fima followed on tiptoe with a jug of hot water. He held out his cupped palms.

"Pour it out!"¹

The hospital train, scorched and blackened, its windows shattered, returned to the rear. A burnt-out coach dangled at the tail. Green lights glowed in front of it, and other trains made way for it.

¹ A Russian custom—to wash in running water.

PART II

MORNING

Chapter V

From East to West

Recalling the first trip, the people in the hospital train wondered at themselves; how was it that they had not understood the simplest things? Why, for instance, had they blacked-out the coach windows, when the train had been standing by the open platform, without any camouflage, plainly visible even to distant bombers? Why had they felt that the train was the safest refuge, and the people taking stretchers into the town were daring heroes, going to certain death? Actually, there had been much less risk under the open sky. But it was only later on that they realized this, when the front was already far behind. Recalling it, they laughed at their own ignorance.

"Just imagine!" Dr. Suprugov cried to Julia Dmitriyevna, to whom he talked more than to others. "I thought that we were all taking a desperate chance when we left the coaches. And actually, it was the only sensible thing to do from the point of view of safety."

It made Faina angry: how long was the man going to keep on chewing the cud over and over again? But she said nothing, because she had certain designs on Suprugov. . .

Faina was now sharing a compartment with Julia Dmitriyevna. Actually, she should have shared with Olga Mikhailovna, the assistant doctor. The matron and assistant doctor had almost identical functions in the train: Olga Mikhailovna was in charge of the coach for serious cases, Faina—the slight wounds; but their duties were almost identical. They should have lived together, but they did not get on. Olga Mikhailovna, shy, modest and consistent, did not like the boisterous Faina.

The matron's way of openly running after men seemed immoral to Olga Mikhailovna. And without even wishing to do so she kept picking on Faina, never overlooking the slightest failing. At the daily ten-minute conference in the morning, when all the medical personnel gathered, Olga Mikhailovna never missed a chance to give Faina a pinprick about her mistakes. They were all trifles—that two of Faina's patients had broken the regulations and gone out to walk beside the train; that a patient who was on diet had eaten a bun that he had bought from a woman at a station, and the nurse had not noticed what he was doing. Olga Mikhailovna's voice rang with a sharp edge when she disclosed such disgraceful affairs, while Faina sat there crimson, breathing hard. It was difficult for her to justify herself. It was true—the men had been walking about beside the coach, it was true that the lieutenant from coach five had eaten the bun and had later vomited, and it was true that Faina had to answer for it all.

It was all very well for Olga Mikhailovna; in her Krieger coach she had only a hundred and ten men—and what were they like?—Almost all of them amputation cases, tied down to their beds. There they lay, poor things, on their cots with side-nets, like children, and for the most part kept quiet. There was no need to worry about anybody there breaking the rules, taking a walk beside the train, or going in his pyjamas to buy buns or vodka at the stops. . .

She, Faina, had about three hundred people in her charge whenever the train was loaded. As soon as dinner was over, treatment began—massage, baths, electric treatment—

enough to drive you crazy; from morning till night the sisters and nurses ran themselves off their feet, and Faina most of all. And then try to keep an eye on each and every one, to see that he did not eat anything that was forbidden! And those weren't old men or paralytics, good Lord! They were healthy young fellows with slight wounds, full of life. At first, when they were in pain, they moaned and groaned and were in a panic lest they should be crippled, unfit for work. But as soon as they began to feel a little better—then they were telling jokes and funny stories, making up to the nurses, and singing; they were ready for anything and everything, even going right back into battle. . . If you told them: "Comrade, vodka's bad for you!" they would laugh and say: "Vodka? Oh! Just watch me drink a hundred grams—it'll cure all diseases in a jiffy!" And what could you say to them? They were right—it would.

Such are Russian men. Faina, a Russian woman, could understand them. . . "You don't know anything about life, my dear," she thought, listening in silence to Olga Mikhailovna. "You see all this as a pathetic picture. A wounded man lying groaning: 'Sister! Water! A drop of water!' And yourself over him like an angel of mercy. . . No, my dear, it may happen that you get a glass of medicine flung in your face, because here you've got nerve-shattered, irritable cases, they've been looking death in the face; and you wipe it off and say nothing, and bring some more medicine, and persuade him to drink it—that's what being a nurse means. And while you've been attending to him, there's another one gone to take a walk outside the train."

Faina said nothing of all this aloud; there are certain regulations issued by the medical corps, there are instructions from the evacuation and transit station, there's a commandant and political officer in the train—she, Faina, was small fry, it wasn't for her to be pushing herself forward with her opinions. . . .

But Faina found unexpected support in Julia Dmitriyevna.

"The doctor's assistant won't ever get anywhere," she said one day.

Faina glowed.

"Why do you think so?"

"Her whole life's made up of small, trifling things. They fill all her thoughts. She's no time to spare for the big things."

Faina was surprised.

"Julia Dmitriyevna, don't be offended, but your life's made up of small things too. . . ."

"That's my duty," Julia Dmitriyevna objected. "In the surgery the slightest neglect may have the most serious consequences for the patient. But at the same time, a doctor or a nurse should have the courage and the ability to ignore unimportant details. The assistant doctor is conscientious, and nothing more. In time she'll develop into an average medical practitioner for uninteresting cases. She'd be good at treating influenza or itch. She's no good for scientific work, but just for every-day practice."

"And I?" asked Faina.

Julia Dmitriyevna surveyed her critical-

ly—from the waved hair to the fashionable, worn shoes.

"You could be good for science. I can feel that there's a certain scope about you. You could be good for science if you didn't let things distract you."

Faina sighed and embraced Julia Dmitriyevna. She wanted to kiss her, but thought better of it.

"You're right, it's terrible how right you are," said Faina.

And when the sisters living in the staff coach had to pair up, so as to make room for an office, it somehow seemed to happen of itself that Julia Dmitriyevna voluntarily moved into Faina's compartment, and Faina was sincerely glad of it.

Now the hospital train was no longer making the trip to the front. Special trains had been allocated for this—"flying trains", consisting of just a few coaches. Rather better fitted-up trains, called "temporary hospital trains", evacuated the wounded from the front-line zone and brought them to the field hospitals. And special rear trains took the men deep into the interior, often thousands of miles from the battlefield.

According to the new classification, the train with which our story deals was a typical rear-line train. For the front it was too big, too unwieldy, and too expensive. It was a mobile hospital, comfortable and excellently equipped. After the first two trips—to Pskov and Tikhvin—it was assigned to the rear.

Some of the staff were well satisfied with the change—peaceful people who had been sorely tried by the dangers of the front. The necessity of keeping cool and working under fire had been a strain on their nerves. Others regarded it with indifference.

But there were also people who were unhappy, disappointed, even offended about the change to the rear.

Nizvetsky was unhappy. Julia Dmitriyevna was disappointed. Faina was offended.

Danilov was pulled two ways.

On the one hand, he had come to love his train, and every day found him more jealous for it. In the depths of his heart he was glad that this beautiful train had been taken away from enemy bombs. On the other hand, he was not so pleased to find himself far from the front, doing work that seemed to him trivial. Sometimes, like Sukhoyedov, he felt that he had been thrust aside, and then he was angry, had murderous thoughts of Potapenko who had sent him to this work, and frightened the nurses with his black looks. Later, he could take himself in hand, and the gloomy fit passed, only to return after a little while.

The Germans had already been driven from Moscow. Spring was in the air. Danilov waited tensely to see what the summer would bring. Then the Germans launched a new offensive and began approaching the Kuban, the Caucasus, and Danilov burned with fury and helplessness.

"Pull yourself together, man," he told himself, more soberly. "Think they can't manage there without you?"

He sent an application to the evacuation authorities, asking to be transferred to active service. No reply. He sent a letter to Potapenko personally—no reply. He wrote to the military department of the Communist Party Central Committee.

The coach which had been burned out in Pskov was repaired in Kirov.

The railway repair yard had refused to handle the job, pleading lack of workers. "The coach is done for, if you start messing about with it you'll never be through," said the railwaymen. In the workshops the men had gone to the front, and lads and young girls were doing the work. . . . Danilov talked to his own people, and they agreed to tackle the job themselves. Danilov placed Protassov, the coach repair foreman, dignified and indolent, in charge of the brigade. Kravtsov, it appeared, could turn his hand to anything—he was fitter, welder and glazier. The whole day he and Protassov argued until they were hoarse. Each one insisted upon his own way, and his own right to decide the issue, but in the evening they disappeared together, and returned more than a little tipsy, and filled with the greatest affection for each other. Sukhoyedov, Medvedyev, Kostritsyn, Nizvetsky, Bogeichuk, Goremykin—all the men except the doctors helped in the repair work, and even Danilov recalled what he had learned from his father, and went to work as Kravtsov's assistant. The girls hauled materials, cleared up, painted the coach and got in everybody's way. . . . And within six fine April days, the work was finished.

All this pleased Danilov mightily. It was not so much the value of the coach—though it was satisfying to know that nothing had been lost that had been entrusted to him, the enemy had not succeeded in getting anything. But it was especially pleasant for Danilov to see how the other people in the train shared his feeling, how they regarded the repaired coach with new eyes, with a feeling of personal interest. Even Protassov's puffy, unshaven face shone with satisfaction when he stood on the platform, stomach thrust forward and legs astride, to regard his hands' work. . . .

A meeting was called to celebrate the successful conclusion of the work. Kravtsov appeared in a natty jacket and tie. There was a great deal said about him, and all of it was in praise. Danilov was amazed—what had happened to the Mephistophelian frown? The hardened drinker blushed and melted like a young girl, listening to compliments. . . . But the next morning, Danilov again saw the scorched old devil with hollow cheeks and sombre gaze.

Doctor Belov received news about Igor.

A letter arrived from Leningrad—the only one during the whole of that time. It was dated September 5th, and the doctor received it on January 1st, New Year's Day. Sonechka wrote that she was feeling depressed, but that he should not worry about her—a splendid bomb shelter had been built under their house. She asked who washed his clothes and how his kidney stones were. (The kidney stones—heavens, he had not even

thought about them from the time he had been called up!)

A letter had come from Igor the previous day, Sonechka wrote. He had left Pskov with a tank unit and would not return home until the Germans were defeated. "I was not surprised by the letter," Sonechka wrote. "But I was surprised at my reaction to it. Three months ago, I went crazy with anxiety if Igor did not come home at night. And now I did not even cry."

Lyalya wrote a note at the bottom, saying that Mummie was splendid, and she, Lyalya, was now working in a military hospital as registrar. Lyalya thoroughly approved of what Igor had done, only she was sorry he had not come home to say goodbye.

There were no more letters.

When the first alarming news came of the siege, and of starvation beginning in Leningrad, the doctor was frantic. His food stuck in his throat, and even when he was hungry, he could swallow nothing. . . . Danilov helped him over this time.

"Is your family in Leningrad, or have they left?" he asked.

"No," the doctor replied, "they haven't gone, you know, somehow, we never thought about it."

"We might manage to send a parcel," said Danilov.

He could manage anything. By some complicated route, through a friend whose daughter was married to an airman, a parcel was sent to Sonechka's address in Leningrad containing rusks, flour, butter and all kinds of things. The doctor did not know if the parcel would ever arrive. It was best to think that it would. And on the day when he sent it, he felt as though he had just fed Sonechka and Lyalya with rusks and butter till they could eat no more, and he was happy to feel that they had had so much. He collected sugar, biscuits and other dainties which he got from Sobol, and waited for the time when he felt he could ask Danilov to arrange for another parcel to be sent.

Many days passed, and there were no more letters from Leningrad. Twice in those months the hospital train received mail, but it contained nothing for Dr. Belov.

He was naturally optimistic. He was worried, of course, but not too much so. The situation in Leningrad had improved somewhat, people were already being taken away from the city again, he himself had seen one trainload. . . . It was terrible, God how terrible it was. Exhausted, wasted people with starvation diarrhea. Children looking old and wizened. . . . But Sonechka and Lyalya had food. Ivan Egorych had sent it. They could not have starvation diarrhea. It was simply that the letter had not come yet.

Perhaps they had left Leningrad before the siege began. Sonechka was always so capable. . . . And now they were living quietly somewhere in the Urals. And Lyalya was plump and rosy as she had always been.

Soon a letter would come. Of course, of course it would. It would come with the next mail—a whole pile of letters. Perhaps there would be one from Igor. His mother had sent him the address, and he would write to his

ther. Their ways would not lie apart for ever. . . He was a sensible boy, he would grow up, he would understand that he could not wound his father so. Sonechka would bring them together again.

Oh, when would it come, that day when all four of them would be sitting together in the small dining room, with the lamp shining on their dear faces under its shade with the torn strings of beads! Would that day ever come?

"Yes, it will come," the calm, well-built, commanding figure of Danilov seemed to assure him. "Can there be any question of it?" he read in the raised brows and proud calm of Julia Dmitriyevna. "Why, of course it will!" said Lena's sweet, untroubled, mischievous face. Only Suprugov conveyed no assurance: who knows—perhaps; and then again, perhaps not. . . .

If anybody asked Danilov what education he had had, he would reply—elementary.

That was quite true—he had come from a peasant family, had never left the village until he was eighteen and had been to the elementary school, where the curriculum consisted of writing, arithmetic and religious study; all of these subjects had been taught by one and the same teacher.

But still it was not true, because from the time of the Revolution, he had studied almost continuously. He had been taught by the Communist Youth League, the Party, the Red Army. He had studied in special schools, at courses, in circles. The courses sometimes lasted for ten to fifteen days, and the circles went on for years.

It might have seemed that he was always listening to the ears in work, that he had no time left for study, but nevertheless he was always learning something, and actually knew a great deal.

He was a practical agronomist, a practical veterinary surgeon, a practical builder, he

was carpenter, fitter, blacksmith, he knew bookkeeping and commerce.

When he was working in the country, he had read a great many books on agriculture. Now, in the hospital train he started on medical textbooks. He wanted to understand the essence of the matter. Dr. Belov gave him Pirogov, and Danilov opened the thick volume with respect and a secret awe—would he not find the eminent surgeon's language too technical for him? But from the very first page the book delighted him by its lucidity, its passionate earnestness and its topical interest. It appeared that even in the days of the defense of Sevastopol, in 1854, people had been thinking of the same things that occupied him, Danilov, in 1942—the better organization of the transport of wounded to the rear.

Of course, within ninety years the technique of evacuating the wounded had gone ahead. If only Pirogov could have seen these hospital trains, that dispensary coach, the modern surgical instruments. . . But nevertheless, not everything was accomplished. There was a great deal that was new and good to be done.

And as usual, Danilov's hands itched to be working on the new and the good.

During the long days when the train was running empty, when it had delivered its wounded to the hospital and had left the far hinterland to go back and fetch another load, in these days small every-day cares found their way into people's consciousness. But when it was time to load, everything changed. War entered the wards where every fold on the beds had been so tenderly smoothed out; it brought its tumult, speaking in groans, banging with crutches. Tobacco smoke rose in a dozen thin spirals to the ceiling. Blankets were twisted, pillows tumbled. The odour of pus, sweat, and men's strong breath conquered the smell of disinfectants. . . The train was running loaded. . . .

Chapter VI

From West to East

Lena worked conscientiously.

She cleaned and tidied the coach, helped the wounded in and out of their clothes, assisted at dressing wounds, brought dinners, and read the newspapers aloud, stumbling slightly over the names of foreign towns.

The patients were fond of her. The older men called her "daughter", and stroked her cropped head. The young ones said:

"What a wife she'd make!"

She tidied up after them patiently, and persuaded them to eat porridge, the very sight of which made many of them furious.

"I'm surprised at you," she would say. "You're just like children. It's one of the most nourishing things possible, if you want to know. I'll ask the dietitian how many calories it contains."

"You go along to your dietitian," they would bawl. "Let her eat her calories herself, instead of giving us oats, what does she think we are—horses?"

But when they said goodbye to her, they would shake her hand for a long time, and look at her affectionately, and ask:

"Give me your address, Sister, I want to write to you, I'll never forget you."

"I'm not giving you any address," she would answer. "You won't write anyway, and if you do I shan't answer, I don't like writing letters."

Although she did not like writing, she wrote many letters—and all to the same address, the same field post office.

You keep on writing and writing, and it is as though you throw them into some bottomless well, instead of a letter box. And the well gives back no reply. It was only after three or four months, when the train came to the place where it was registered that the mail was brought in—envelopes and without envelopes, folded triangles, postcards, and military forms with red stars upon them.

After receiving a letter, Lena seemed to

be illumined by some inner glow, she felt she could hear his voice in her ears, a manly voice vibrating with tenderness.

... It was a hot, dry summer. Black dust drifted in through the open windows to settle on the white curtains, the sheets, the bandages and the overalls. The nurses' work was doubled—they continually had to be shaking out curtains and bedding, washing the floor, and wiping down the tables, frames and walls with wet cloths. . . The wounded wilted in the heat and lost appetite.

They had just taken on a load from the hospital and were carrying them east, to the Urals. There were twenty men in the Krieger coach, where Lena worked. They were capricious, they smoked, they refused to drink boiled water—asked for fresh water with ice in it. No. 17—an amputation case, the left leg taken off at the knee—did not smoke and demanded nothing, but that was almost worse. He neither ate nor slept. His face, dark bronze against the white pillow, had sharpened, and never lost a look of loathing. Olga Mikhailovna bent over him and talked to him gently, in motherly tones.

"Why don't you eat anything? Don't you like the food?"

"The food's all right, thank you," No. 17 replied through set teeth.

"Maybe you'd prefer something else? Fresh eggs? Curd cakes? With berries? Tell us what you'd like and we'll make it."

"Thank you, I don't need anything."

There were a hundred and nine seriously wounded waiting for Olga Mikhailovna. A hundred and nine problems, hundreds of instructions, hundreds of complaints from the wounded—about the heat, the porridge, about the sister who did not give them un-boiled water; hundreds of complaints from the sisters about the wounded—they quarrelled, they refused to take their medicine, they wanted a draught through the coach. . .

Olga Mikhailovna read No. 17's case book and said:

"You're a sailor, Comrade Glushkov, you should pull yourself together."

"I used to be a sailor," said No. 17.

Lena gazed at him. The sunburned face with the white forehead and black eyes reminded her of her husband.

"Lena!" said Olga Mikhailovna. "Straighten the lieutenant's pillow."

She went on further. Lena raised the pillow and looked into angry, tormented black eyes. . .

"You're called Lena?" asked Glushkov.

"Yes," she replied.

He looked at her, and his eyes softened.

"Little Snubnose",¹ he said, and stopped short. "My sister's called Lena. . ." And fell silent.

She was called away to another bed. She gave the men bedpans, persuaded them to drink boiled water, wiped away dust with a wet cloth, straightened bedding, and when the train stopped, ran out at their request to buy them a bucket of raspberries. A jolly captain, a stout man in a plaster-of-Paris

cast, divided the raspberries with many jests and gave Lena a jarful.

At dinner time she came to Glushkov again.

"Eat something!" she said. "This is a special dinner, the assistant doctor ordered it for you. Mutton with tomatoes. And there'll be curd cakes for supper. Eat something!"

"I'll eat, I'll eat," he said impatiently and put a fragment of tomato into his mouth. "Stop here a bit, Little Snubnose, don't go away, you always keep going away. I'll eat if you stop here."

"All right," she said, and sat down beside him.

"But you're not eating," she said a little later. "You're only pretending. You've got to eat."

"So as to live, is that it?" asked Glushkov.

"Why, of course. So as to live."

"I lied about my sister," said Glushkov. "She isn't my sister. We wanted to get married. Now she'll find somebody else. . . Well, to hell with all that. That's the least of it. . . Eat that special mutton, if you want. I don't want it."

"That's not true, that she'll find somebody else," said Lena.

"Well, it's all one to me whether she does or not. . . I shan't go back." He ground his teeth. "A cripple, a repulsive thing like that. Coming along on a pegleg. . . damn those Jerries! I'll send for Mother. We'll live somewhere else. Mother'll go anywhere with me. Mothers are ready to live anywhere. . ."

"Not repulsive at all," said Lena, staring at some point straight in front of her. "I don't see that it's repulsive. As for your mother and for anybody else, you're just as dead without a leg as with it. And there's nothing so terrible with you, if you want to know. You're still able to work, you're just as good-looking as ever, you're young, you can learn anything, you can get married—you've got all your life before you. And you won't have a pegleg, you'll get a good artificial leg, you'll wear boots, there'll be nothing to be seen. . ."

He closed his eyes and fell silent. And she rose and went to the other end of the coach because she suddenly felt that she wanted terribly to stroke Glushkov's shaved head. To lay her hand on his brow, which was white above the black eyes. Danya. . .

The long hot day at last burned itself out. The evening bustle came to an end—supper, treatment, straightening the beds for the night. For the last time Olga Mikhailovna passed through the coach and put out the lights, leaving only one burning over the table where the sister on duty sat. . . Lena went quietly back and forth along the thick drugget. The coach was without divisions, roomy, comfortable, with chaise longue and little tables—it would have been exactly like a hospital ward, had it not been for the second, upper row of hanging beds. Ten beds on the right, ten on the left; five above, five below on either side. On each pillow—shaved head, a sunburned face. . . The lamp with its blue shade shed a pale light on those dark faces, closed eyes and lips pressed together in sleep. Only Glushkov was not

¹ In Russian, used affectionately.

sleep. Every time Lena passed she could see his eyes shining.

She wanted to talk to him, but she was afraid. Way was it that she had so nearly touched that white forehead above the bronzed features?

"I'm just sorry for him," she said to herself. "I want to comfort him, like a sister. . . He's like Danya."

"I'll go to him, stroke his face. Just a little. Nothing special about that, if it's only a little. . . After all, I'm not in love with him! Not a scrap. If he's sent to hospital tomorrow it'll be all one to me.

And that was true.

"I'll go, I'll go. He's got black eyes. He talked gently to me. I'll be friendly, tender to him, and he'll be the same to me."

"I'll go right now and talk to him. Talk to him, to distract him from all those thoughts. I'll even lay my hand on his forehead. . . As a sister would do—just the same.

She went to Glushkov. But he was asleep. His face was tormented. He was breathing gently, like a child.

She stood there, watching the quiet rise and fall of his chest under his shirt. She forced herself to think: "What a good thing that he's fallen asleep," but in the depths of her heart she was sorry, even felt injured.

Suddenly he sobbed—a prolonged sob, almost a groan. Probably he had been crying before he had fallen asleep, and was still doing it in his dream. He had been crying, and she had not noticed it.

Dawn was beginning to break—summer nights are short.

"I won't show tenderness to anybody, except just one in all world, the only one for all my life. He's my husband, I saw him off to the war, he went away believing in me. And you can believe in me, Danya, go on believing in me, my dearest. You're the only one I want. That's just a brother sleeping here—a brother; I have a thousand brothers like that. . . But Danya, why must we have all this—wounds and suffering, these beds, these bed urinals, and all this longing, when life was so wonderful, so full of happiness. . ."

A call from the other end of the coach: "Nurse!"

"Coming!" she called back, and with a light step answered the call.

Kramin was in bed No. 18, above Glushkov. He was a small, sickly man with a shining bald head and a sharp-featured, dry, humorous face. His round eyes in their thick-rimmed glasses made his features even sharper. In fact, altogether he was rather like an owl.

His spine was injured, and both his legs paralyzed, and suffering had dried him up until he was as light as a child. For what remained of his life he would have to go on crutches. Sometimes he would fling back his quilt, and survey his thin, yellow, withered legs, with lower lip pushed out.

When he was brought into the coach, he asked for books.

"As many as possible, please," he said. Lena brought him everything she could find in the train's meagre library—Eugene

Onegin, Zoshchenko's humorous stories, a single number of a 1939 magazine and another book which had to remain nameless because the first and last pages had been used for cigarette paper.

"Delightful," said Kramin.

He read them all through on the very first day. He would lie on his back, holding the book low down over his face. His head moved from left to right and back again, as his eyes followed the lines, but he read remarkably quickly. He seemed to be pecking at the books, like a hungry chicken swallowing grain.

When there were no more books, he took off his glasses, folded his arms behind his head (he was obviously delighted that he could still do all he wished with his arms) and began to join in the general conversation.

He was not talkative, but would throw in short remarks here and there.

Kramin found everything delightful.

"Delightful porridge!" he said, returning an empty bowl to Lena and laughing with his very light, almost colourless eyes.

They didn't bother him unduly with dressings. Sometimes he would very quietly and politely ask for a shot of morphine, and it was given to him willingly. He would have to spend a long time in various hospitals, before he could even move about on crutches.

Kramin had been a consulting lawyer at one of the biggest Leningrad factories, generally considered a lover of books and theatres, and something of a sybarite. His wife was a wonderfully beautiful woman.

His friends had been amazed, they had even refused to credit it when the rumour flew round that he had refused exemption, joined up and was studying at a cadet course.

In the end they had to believe it, when one of them met him on the Nevsky, in uniform.

He was one of the first to finish the course, got his platoon, and for a month carried out minor patrol assignments. He got things done, but the higher command did not place too much reliance on him. His puny appearance did not inspire confidence.

Terrible days began for Leningrad. The Germans captured Gatchina, Pushkin, Krasnoye Selo. In those country retreats where he used to go for weekends, Kramin now went out on patrol with his men. His wife he had sent away during the summer.

One dark, moonless, rainy night, Kramin crossed the Neva with the men. During the crossing, nineteen of them were killed by German shells. Kramin left the right bank a platoon commander, and climbed the left bank a company commander—two platoon commanders had been killed at the crossing. The remnants of their men joined Kramin's, thus forming a company en route.

Along trenches half-filled with corpses, Kramin crawled into the heart of territory captured from the enemy. German rockets were soaring above Dubrovka, German machine guns were spraying the trenches. Throughout the next day, Kramin and his men hugged the cover of those trenches, with a barrage raging around them. In the evening he received his orders—to attack at nightfall.

Crawling, moving from trench to trench, he brought out his company. Rain was still falling, Dubrovka was literally under fire and water. A man whose nerve failed him, who refused to leave the trench, Kramin shot.

They attacked, took seven prisoners, and when they were already returning, Kramin received the wound in the spine which crippled him for life. Two of his men, a Russian and an Uzbek, dragged him along the same trench piled with dead until they reached the bank of the Neva, where a field dressing station had been set up under a steep fall of land, sheltered from shells. From there, Kramin was taken unconscious across the river. For some time he was kept in a hospital near the front, then sent to Leningrad. And that was the end of his army life.

Kramin had no desire to write letters in the train, he was content to read and talk.

The people about him were quiet and made no fuss. The staff were polite and careful—evidently, somebody had them well in hand.

He liked the feeling of going somewhere. He had always loved travelling, and been to a great many places. He had even tried to join an Arctic expedition going on an icebreaker, but just then he had fallen in love; there had been romance, marriage—and the Arctic had been postponed.

Now, of course, he would never be able to go to the Arctic.

Never mind.

He was travelling, the familiar peaceful landscape swept past the windows, he re-read the familiar books, he did everything that he could, that fate had left to him—and it was delightful.

It was not the custom in the train to tell the men their route. This wily tactic of the command was the result of bitter experience from their first trips. It was enough to hint that the train would pass through, say, Moscow, and immediately there would be a dozen Moscow men demanding that they be left there. Everybody wanted to be in his own town. It even went as far as scandalous incidents—actual attempts to run away from the train. So in order to put an end to that sort of thing, the route was kept secret.

But Kramin was not to be deceived. He knew railway geography too well. On the third day, he called Danilov.

"Comrade Political Officer," he said confidentially, "we're going through Sverdlovsk."

"Nothing of the kind," said Danilov. "You're mistaken."

"I've a request to make you," said Kramin. "My wife's in Sverdlovsk. I do beg you to let her know that we're going through the town. I would like so much to see her. Here's the address. If it's not putting you to too much trouble I should be extremely grateful."

"But you're wrong, I tell you," said Danilov. However, he took the address and sent off the telegram.

Another of the men in the coach was Kolka.

In his case book he had the dignified appellation of Nikolai Nikolayevich. But the whole coach called him Kolka.

He was eighteen years old, he had volun-

teered for the front, distinguished himself near Vyazma, been wounded, recovered, returned to the front, distinguished himself near Orel, been wounded there and was now being sent to the far rear for a thorough course of treatment.

He already had two decorations, and was to receive a third. He spoke about them with naive pleasure, sure that everybody would share in his gladness and regard him with unflinching benevolence.

"Oh, Kolka, Kolka," said the stout captain in the plaster-of-Paris cast. "By the end of the war you'll have a sample of every kind of decoration there is; here, take some raspberries."

Kolka ate the raspberries and licked his fingers. Kramin shared his sugar with him because the daily ration was never enough for Kolka.

Just what it was that had earned him his decorations, he could never tell coherently. He'd run and fired. He'd crawled and fired. He'd sat and fired. He did not understand about tactics. He had just done his job and did it well, that could be seen from his decorations and by what he said.

"Evidently you had a good commander," remarked the captain, after listening to him attentively, "for without that commander you'd have been nowhere."

Kolka came from the Voronezh Region. Three years previously he had finished his seven-year school, and worked in the collective farm as head of a youth brigade. Kramin asked him why he had volunteered instead of waiting to be called up.

"But they want to break up the collective farms," said Kolka, "and give the land to landlords."

He said it without any heat, as simply as though he were talking of a mad dog, or serving that it was mad.

According to Kolka, the Germans weren't so very terrible, there was no need to be afraid of them.

"They just wanted to scare us stiff, and with what?—Motorcycles. Three hundred men on motorcycles rushing along the road. Three hundred or else four... Roar and rattle, and smoke, and right at you. If a fellow's got weak nerves, he may get scared. But what's terrible about motorcycles? I wanted to buy one before the war."

"And now?" asked the captain. "Don't you want it any more?"

"Now!" said Kolka. "I'll get one for nothing now."

He had a clear childlike face which had never known a razor. He was the only one in the whole coach who felt awkward over his nakedness and his helplessness with so many women around, and his blue eyes would rest on Lena with thoughtful perplexity. He was shy, but at the same time could not refrain from talking about himself, and did so without any fear that the grown men about might be laughing at him.

"The worst moment was when I was wounded the first time," he said. "Not used to it. I even felt sick with fright—thought I was going to die."

"Afraid of dying, were you?"
"No!" Kolka replied. "I felt mad at the thought of dying when I'd seen nothing of life yet. Nothing," he repeated, staring in front of him sternly and challengingly.

A dum-dum bullet had wounded him in both legs. Gangrene had set in in the hospital, but his powerful constitution had come to the aid of medicine, and the infection had been overcome. Now Kolka considered himself quite well. With the help of a nurse, he could walk to the dispensary for dressings. He liked to sit in a chaise longue, his big boyish hands on his knees. There was a dignity and confidence in his pose that had nothing childlike about it. "I have done something, and I shall do more, depend upon it," said his whole figure, the full-lipped, blue-eyed face.

Dr. Belov liked to come into coach eleven and listen to Kolka talking. No, of course, Igor was not like that, not a bit. His face was different, and his character. "Igor's nothouse plant, while Kolka's as transparent, clean and fresh as a wild flower," thought the doctor. But Igor was a lad like Kolka, even younger, and the doctor liked to look at Kolka.

Danilov, a white overall pulled clumsily over his set shoulders, was sitting beside Glushkov, telling him the contents of the day's communiqué. Moving into the centre of the coach, he began tracing a map of the Black Sea and the Crimea on the drugget with the toe of his boot. The Germans were breaking through to the Crimea.

"Of course it's hard to say how things will go," said Danilov. "But in any case, he's going to break a few teeth on Sevastopol."

"He"—that was Jerry, the German, Hitler, the Fascist, the enemy.

"Yes, history will accord Sevastopol a second Order," said the captain in the plaster-of-Paris cast.

They talked about Moscow, about Leningrad, about their gallant defense.

As Danilov spoke, he kept turning to Glushkov, as though inviting him to take part in the conversation.

But Glushkov only opened his tight lips to say wearily:

"Our towns defend themselves splendidly."

"The German is coming to the end of his tether," said the captain. "That's a fact."

"I'm waiting all the time to see where he'll trip up," said a pale, handsome, hook-nosed Georgian, wounded in the head, from an upper berth. "I've been looking at the atlas trying to foretell where we'll start driving him back." He spoke with a slight accent, and laughed at his fortune-telling.

"A map's no good for fortune-telling," mused the captain. "But in Penza I heard a fortune-teller—wonderful how exact!"

Now everybody burst out laughing, and Danilov prepared to go. Every morning after breakfast it was his custom to go through the coaches and tell the men the latest communiqué. As he was leaving, he laid his hand firmly on Glushkov's shoulder.

"Chin up, Comrade Lieutenant," he said in a low voice, audible to Glushkov alone.

"Chin up. You've got to eat, got to sleep, got to live."

Glushkov turned incredulous eyes upon him.

"With two legs life's good," he said loudly.

"Better than with one, that's true," said Danilov. "Nobody's arguing about that. But just think a minute—where you've come from, there's many lost their lives. But you didn't. They make splendid artificial legs nowadays, your stump's healing well, you'll find walking easy. You ought to feel you're in luck."

"What's a cripple got to live for?" said Glushkov. "Better kick off at once."

"That's not right," replied a very calm, definite voice—Kramin's.

He took off his glasses and breathed on the lenses. Everybody fell silent—they all liked listening to him.

"The political officer's right," Kramin continued, wiping the glass carefully with the corner of the sheet. "Actually, you've had rare good luck. You went, prepared to die . . ." (he held up the glasses to the light and examined them) "and you're still alive. That is to say, you've got a second span of life. Can you think of anything to equal such a gift?"

He said no more. All waited for him to continue. At last the captain asked:

"My dear fellow—I want to follow your thought to its logical conclusion. Do you consider yourself lucky too?"

"Undoubtedly," Kramin replied.

Danilov went away. All were silent, tired with talking, and the coach seemed very quiet.

"You once asked Kolka why he volunteered for the army," said Glushkov jerkily, unevenly, addressing himself to Kramin above him. "But why did *you* go to the front?"

Kramin hung his head over the side of the bed and looked down at Glushkov.

"Excuse me," said Glushkov challengingly, "I can see you're not so young and not particularly suited for the front. Anyone can see that you're something in the scientific line. . . Why did you go? To make a gesture?"

"Well, you see, I'm a rich man," said Kramin, returning to his book. "I went to defend my property."

Sergeant Nifonov took no part in the general conversation in the coach. He confined himself to the most necessary words—"Yes," "No," "Give me some water." When he saw a new patient, Nifonov would ask him:

"You don't happen to know Bereza—Semyon Bereza, a machine-gunner?" and he would add regiment and company. But none of his neighbours, none of the doctors or nurses knew the machine-gunner Semyon Bereza. People asked Nifonov what he wanted with Bereza, but the sergeant did not answer, he would close his eyes and pretend to be dozing.

How good it would be to know if Bereza was alive. How fine if he was. And if he could only find out where he was now. . .

But just to talk, to chatter, merely for the sake of wagging your tongue—what was the good of that? Nothing to talk about as long as the main thing was still uncertain. And

it was this that he wanted to discuss with Semyon Bereza.

They had known each other for just ten minutes. But it seemed to Nifonov that he had never had a closer friend.

On that damned field with hot dust stopping up one's throat, a fellow from another company, a man he did not know, had been on Nifonov's right in the trench. At first Nifonov could only see his shoulder, cap and a red ear; he was firing a machine-gun, his shoulder vibrating in time with it. Then there was a moment's silence, and the man turned and looked at Nifonov with bright blue, protruding, reckless eyes.

"Unknown pal," he said, "give me some tobacco!"

His face was black with dust. He took a pinch of tobacco from Nifonov's pouch, nodded and lighted up, pinching the cigarette firmly, angrily in his hard fingers.

Nifonov knew that he was hardly likely to leave this field uninjured, but he said nothing of that to his neighbour. He rolled a cigarette for himself too.

"A light," he said, and the other man held out his cigarette.

They exchanged names. A shell burst beyond the wood.

"To hell with it," said Bereza softly.

The Germans retreated, and again began pounding with their artillery. Bereza looked straight ahead, neither frowning nor starting; his grim face looked as though it had been cast in iron. Nifonov felt it pleasant to have Bereza's shoulder beside him—a strong, reliable shoulder. The thought came to him—fine to have a chum, a grand thing, men's friendship... and then he ceased to think, ceased to exist—for a long time.

As in a dream he remembered a certain discussion. It had been in the hospital, and two doctors had been arguing, thinking that he was unconscious. One of them had said that it would be necessary to take off both arms and legs. The other said—only the left leg. The argument continued for a long time. Nifonov had been perfectly indifferent. He had felt as though the real Nifonov was dead, and this Nifonov whom they were discussing was someone else, some stranger, someone superfluous, let them cut off all they wanted. Even his head.

The doctors' voices sounded through a faint ringing in his ears, then the air he drew in changed to something sweet, choking, he breathed submissively and sank into a deep sleep, an everlasting sleep, it seemed...

He awakened. He thought that it was the pain that had awakened him, but he could not distinguish where it was. It seemed to be everywhere. Particularly in his left leg, the shattered shin-bone of his left leg. He groaned weakly, like a child—the real Nifonov would never have been able to groan like that. Tears of pain rolled from his eyes, the real Nifonov never cried. The old woman with glasses sitting by his bed rose and said:

"Now, thank God, he's come to and he's crying. Cry, son, cry, it'll do you good."

She went away. Another woman came to

Nifonov, wiped his lips and stroked his hair as though he were a little boy.

The doctors arrived. They did not argue any more, but talked quietly. The old woman in the glasses came back and gave Nifonov a glucose injection.

"Where does it hurt you, lad?" she asked.

"My leg," said Nifonov.

"Which one?"

"The left."

"Eh-eh-eh!" sighed the old woman.

Nifonov no longer had a left leg; he learned that the next day.

Could a thing like that happen to the real Nifonov—for a leg to hurt when it wasn't there?

In the hospital they were proud of having saved his right leg and both arms.

"Dr. Cheremnykh, he's a wizard, and he not afraid of anything," said the old woman. "He risked everything, your life and his own reputation. 'I don't want to leave just a stump of such a fine man,' says he. Well, he risked it and he won. God loves a brave man. Just see how fine ye'll be for the wedding!"

She winked proudly.

"Your operation'll be written about in all the medical journals!"

Nifonov listened indifferently—what had Dr. Cheremnykh's success got to do with him? That feeble man, tortured by pain, covered with plaster of Paris and bandages—that was Nifonov. Nifonov was a skilled, highly respected worker, who knew his job inside and out, but this useless log couldn't even turn himself in his bed—a nurse had to shift him. His hips became numb from lying on his back, and an inflated rubber ring was placed under him. A man lying helplessly, able to do nothing, wanting nothing—what did it matter what happened to him—whether he died or lived?

The same old woman told Nifonov that a comrade had carried him from the battlefield. She had heard that the other man had been wounded too, but all the same he had dragged Nifonov to the field dressing station. "That was Semyon Bereza," thought Nifonov and asked:

"Is he alive?"

"Well, as for that, lad, what I don't know I can't tell," replied the old woman.

One day Nifonov was told that he was being transferred to another hospital in another town. He was dressed, laid on a stretcher and carried outside. The fresh, clear, hot air seemed to take hold of him, blind him. The wind tore off his cap, and Nifonov had just time to catch it before it flew away.

"Careful with the plaster," cried a nurse.

Nifonov, thunderstruck, looked at his hand, which had suddenly begun to tingle. So it was true? So the doctor had not been lying when he had said that gradually his strength would return? He was the real Nifonov?

The fresh air made him dizzy, his ears rang, he yawned and began to doze on the stretcher...

The last doze, the last attack of kind weakness...

In the train Nifonov reused completely

Waking, he realized that he did not want to sleep any more, and that he was very hungry. He felt himself the old, living, real Nifonov, felt his former strength coming back to him under the bandages and plaster. He lay there looking at the ceiling, narrow boards laid accurately against each other, quite low down over the bed, alabaster-white, well scrubbed. The paint shone.

The hanging bed swung very slightly with the movement of the train, like a cradle. But nothing could lull Nifonov to sleep any more.

Why was his strength coming back to him, when he had lost a leg? The other one was still there, but he would not be able to walk—he had understood so much from the doctor's veiled talk. What was he to do with his old strength?

There were his lathes standing at the factory, a whole row of lathes, their whetted cutters flashing. And he had walked among them—light, agile, and delighting in the unhurried swiftness with which the work went on.

Newspapermen would come and write all sorts of amusing things in their papers—for instance, they would reckon out how many kilometres Nifonov walked in the shop during the day.

He had good wages and a good reputation—both his father and grandfather had worked at the same factory. He had not chosen his job, he had inherited it, like the cottage where he was born and where his parents died.

He was married. . . His friends laughed—the Lord had sent Nifonov a fine family life! His wife was the chairman of the factory trade-union committee, she would come home late in the evening, look at her husband with kindly eyes fogged with weariness, and ask mechanically:

"What was it I was wanting to tell you?"

He would warm up some supper for her and pour out tea. He laughed at her, poked gentle fun at her and respected her greatly. They had two daughters who seemed to grow up by themselves. In the winter they went to school, the summer they spent in a Pioneer camp. . .

How they would all cry when they heard that he had lost a leg. The old women would all come to his wife in the factory committee groaning and moaning and try to comfort her, good simple folk. . . But all that was nothing, nothing. There are worse things than that. It wasn't his leg, it wasn't that his wife and daughters would cry. The thing was this—what would the setter Nifonov be like when he came out of the plaster, what would he be, where would he find a place in life now? Neither his wife nor his daughters, not all the wise books could answer that question. "Got to work it out for myself," thought Nifonov.

Danilov came past.

"Comrade Political Officer," said Nifonov.

Danilov came up to him.

"Comrade Political Officer," Nifonov repeated, rather awkwardly, "You don't happen to remember, haven't you had a man here—Semyon Bereza . . . a machine-gunner?"

Danilov thought for a moment.

"No, I don't remember him. A relation of yours?"

"No, I just wanted to know," replied Nifonov. "He's just a man I met."

He felt that it was only Semyon Bereza who could advise him.

The problem was this.

In the old, peaceful, happy days, Nifonov had had one small weakness, of which he was almost ashamed—his accordion.

It had been left at home by his elder brother, who had been killed in World War I, and Nifonov had taught himself to play. He loved music, and had a good ear. Among the first things he learned to play were Chopin waltzes.

Before he married, he used to play at birthday parties and weddings, but his wife disapproved, she thought it was not refined. However, she allowed him to play at amateur performances at the club.

As the years passed, he didn't play so often. He was no longer a young fellow who could permit himself anything—he was becoming a respected citizen, there were articles about him in the papers, and his wife held a public position in the factory. He himself felt that his passion for the accordion was not quite the thing. He contented himself by playing at home, when there was nobody about.

Now he lay on his bed and thought—what was there wrong with the accordion, after all? It was all Olga's prejudice. What if she is a chairman of the factory trade-union committee? Very nice indeed, let her get on with it; and I'll play the accordion.

He pictured to himself how he would come slowly onto the stage with his artificial leg and crutches. The hall falls silent, people look at his crutches. . . Nifonov sits down on his chair. An apprentice hands him his accordion.

Perhaps it was playing the accordion that was his real job, and not being a setter? Who could tell?

"So that's how it is, Olga. You'll have to live with an accordion player."

But the terrible thing was—suppose the doctor had been wrong? Suppose he would not be able to use his hands properly? How wonderful to be able to use his hands and play the accordion—he had never thought before how wonderful it was. . .

And however you look at it, it's rather awful, somehow, at forty, after being used to a quiet, well-ordered life, to have to start something new. If only he could have talked it all over with some close friend, a man who was bold, decided and unprejudiced. . .

"Nurse! Come here. Listen, you don't happen to remember if Semyon Bereza, machine-gunner, has ever been in this train?"

At Sverdlovsk, a very beautiful young woman came to Dr. Belov and handed him a paper from the evacuation point. It announced that Junior Lieutenant Kramin was to be transferred to the Sverdlovsk hospital.

"Is he badly disfigured?" she asked, and added: "I'm his wife."

"He'll have to go on crutches, you know," the doctor replied. "But he'll be able to do mental work. Absolutely. And you know," he continued, trying to find something comforting to tell her, "it's wonderful how he keeps himself in hand."

"Yes?" she said. "That's fine."

She held herself very upright, head thrown back, and spoke quietly and calmly. Something in her lovely face reminded the doctor of Kramin. "He's probably taught her a lot," thought the doctor.

He took the lady to coach eleven, and Kramin was carried out on a stretcher. The lady stood beside the doctor, quiet and erect. . .

The hot sun shone on Kramin's yellow skin and thin yellow neck, and flashed on his glasses. The lady took a sudden step forward and bent over the stretcher.

Kramin gently put her aside, frowning at the bright sunshine.

"Good morning, good morning, Inochka," he said, and kissed her dark, slender, strong hand. "Let me say goodbye to the doctor."

"And he'll teach her a lot more yet," thought Belov, watching her walk along the platform beside the stretcher, saying something to her husband, her lovely head turned devotedly, submissively towards him.

Chapter VII

Letters

Danilov spent the whole morning with the Sverdlovsk transport officer, trying to get his train moving and at dinnertime an engine was hitched on. It was a tedious journey, stopping at every signal, but at last things began to improve.

Suddenly they found themselves racing ahead at full speed, roaring through vast stations where officials holding raised flags followed them with their eyes. A telegram had come saying that they were urgently needed to take on wounded.

It was evening. Dr. Belov got out his exercise book and wanted to cross out another blue square, the seventh. Seven days since Lena had gone. . . There was a knock at the door—Kostritsyn. He walked into the compartment—grey-headed, massive, thumbs at his trouser seams.

"Sit down," said the doctor, "Let's talk unofficially, as man to man. Sit down. Sit down."

Kostritsyn seated himself.

"Well?" said the doctor. "What's your complaint?"

Kostritsyn coughed into his hand.

"Comrade Commandant," he said, "you're not a young man, either, put yourself in my place. There's not a man on earth who wouldn't grind his teeth."

"Yes," said the doctor, "of course it's like a pantomime—those chickens, I mean. But you know, fresh eggs are good for the wounded. Very good for them."

The train slowed down, they were approaching a station. It halted, but the next moment there was a whistle, and the wheels began rumbling again. . . .

"Comrade Commandant," said Kostritsyn again. "I didn't volunteer in order to keep chickens. I thought a hospital train was a military job. And now isn't this jolly. . . ."

"They told me," said the doctor with innocent flattery, "that you were an expert in agricultural matters, that it was your hobby."

Kostritsyn nodded.

"That's right, I've known all about it since I was a child. We all went in for it at the settlement. I used to keep a goat at home. But it's one thing there, and another thing here. I wouldn't mind pigs—they'd go in the baggage coach. Nobody would see it. . . All

on the quiet. . . None of those smiles and giggles. . . But chickens, damn them! Everybody can see them!"

"Ah, Kostritsyn," said the doctor, sighing "all that's so trivial. . . The day'll come when we'll be eating them with white sauce. . .

Kostritsyn was not listening.

"They have to be let out, don't they? Livestock can't be kept in cages all the time. I let them out wherever it's possible. They wander off. . . scatter, three hundred yards from the train. If you ask the girls to watch them—well they're young, with their heads full of princes and lieutenants, got no taste for looking after chickens. And after a while what's there so difficult about it? They know themselves what they've got to do—as soon as the engine whistles they come running back to the cage themselves. It's not the difficulty I'm talking about, it just makes it look a fool. . . ."

"Stop a bit," said the doctor.

He had heard nothing of Kostritsyn's last words, all his attention had been concentrated on some sort of bustle in the coach. Cries could be heard above the rattle of the wheels, running footsteps and banging doors. Kostritsyn rose, anxious to be of help.

"May I go and see?"

"Yes, find out what it is."

Kostritsyn left the compartment, then returned, grinning from ear to ear.

"Comrade Commandant! The mail's come. The doctor blinked and rose. . . Danilov was standing in the half-open door, gay and smiling.

"A letter for you from Leningrad, Doctor. 'Give it to me, give it to me,' the doctor stammered, taking the envelope with shaking hands.

The letter which Danilov received from the Central Committee of the Party was short, polite and dry. Leaving aside the polite phrases, its contents amounted to—state where you are, Comrade, and work properly there, because you'll have to answer for the job. . . .

So that was that.

Flushing slightly, Danilov folded the letter neatly and put it into his breast pocket where he kept his Party membership card.

A letter from his wife—he glanced over it swiftly. All alive and well. . . . Greetings from relations and friends. . . . Lena would tell him more. Ah, that was a fine girl, how quickly she'd jumped on—after all, the train, had not stood for five minutes. . . .

He decided to test the general atmosphere, and find out who had had letters. He went out into the corridor. Julia Dmitriyevna, Faina and Suprugov were standing by the window. Faina chattering about something, her hand on Suprugov's shoulder. Suprugov was looking melancholy.

"I've had bad news," he said with dignity as Danilov approached. "My mother's died." Danilov did not know what to say when a man he heartily disliked told him about his troubles. Decency demanded that he say something. After a moment's silence, he asked: "How old was she?"

"Seventy-eight," Suprugov replied.

"Yes," said Danilov sympathetically. "A great age."

He walked on. What could he say? An old woman, not in any way remarkable, had lived to a ripe old age and then died.

He went to the commandant to hear what news he had from home. . . .

Dr. Belov was sitting on the divan, the same one where he had sat with his wife. Danilov was thunderstruck—ten minutes ago he had left the doctor flushed, gay, and excited. Now there was a helpless old man sitting there, his face grey and haggard, with all the light gone out of it.

A letter was lying on the table. Danilov took it up and read it.

The doctor looked at him dully. Danilov sat down beside him and said nothing. Suddenly the doctor sighed loudly, his eyes filled with tears and his hands moved helplessly over his knees and the covering of the divan.

"You can't imagine!" he whispered. "You can't imagine. . . ."

He wanted to say that Danilov couldn't imagine what an angel Sonechka had been and what an angel Lyalya had been, and all that they had meant to him, the doctor. But he had not the strength to speak. His shoulders were shaking, he covered his face with his hands and cried, sobbing and groaning. Tears trickled between his fingers and ran into his sleeve, he caught them with trembling lips, swallowed them and choked on them.

Still Danilov said nothing, but sat very erect, pale, something sparkling in his eyes. Then, seeing that the doctor was getting no warmer, he went out into the corridor and called Sister Faina, who brought bromide and sleeping dose. Between them, they forced the doctor to take them, and stayed by him until sleep overcame him. Then they left. As she went out, Faina burst into tears.

"I would give anything," she sobbed, to be able to comfort him."

"And I," said Danilov, "I'd like to kill one of them with my own hands right now, one of those swine that are doing this to us."

That night the train loaded up with wounded. They did not waken Dr. Belov. Danilov announced that the train commandant was

ill, and he and Suprugov signed for the patients. But in the morning he went to the commandant and reported that No. 20—in coach six—a trifling foot wound and concussion—was impossibly capricious. He was demanding the doctor every five minutes, insisting on having a complete bath, giving his neighbours no peace, and they did not know what to do with him; it would be a good thing if the commandant himself could come. . . .

There was only one thing the doctor understood out of all that Danilov said—that he must go somewhere. He put on his overall, and began to go the rounds.

He went from compartment to compartment with uncertain steps, and looked intently into the face of every man, as though trying to find something that it was urgently necessary to discover. Sister Faina and Sister Smirnova followed him, Smirnova handing him the case books. The doctor took them and read them with the same look of intense earnestness. Sometimes the diagnosis was not sufficient for him, then he stopped and read the whole booklet.

He was afraid of reading something not written, and doing the wrong thing. He was afraid of forgetting forever how to give treatment, how to think, to read. The world had retreated from him, lost its sounds, scents, its perceptibility. And that was quite natural—how could the world be the same if Sonechka and Lyalya were no longer in it?

But as the doctor went from coach to coach, his surroundings became more real to him. The words written in the diagnosis and spoken by those around penetrated his consciousness quicker, and called forth the proper thoughts and reactions. His attention was concentrated as usual upon the accustomed objects, and those objects in their turn took on their former character. Voices no longer came from far, far away, they were right there beside him, and each voice had its particular cadence. Plaster-of-Paris and bandages had their characteristic unpleasant smell, the stethoscope brought its familiar sounds to his ear. Here was a man who must go to the isolation compartment, he showed signs of pneumonia of the right lung.

The world wanted to go on living, even though Sonechka and Lyalya were no longer in it. That was incomprehensible, terrible, but the doctor could do nothing about it. He himself was alive. He wanted to see the capricious patient about whom Danilov had told him.

No. 20 turned out to be a strong man of thirty with curly hair and rosy cheeks. He had thrown off his shirt and was lying on top of the rumpled sheet, bare to the waist. His torso was rosy, the shoulders rounded like a woman's. Lutokhin, Ivan Mironovich the doctor read in the case book.

"Any complaints?" asked the doctor. Lutokhin complained of the heat.

"I'm always too hot," he said. "In the hospital they used to give me complete baths, that was the only thing that cooled me."

Then he began to groan, loudly and theatrically, throwing his head back and rolling his eyes.

"Now, now, now," said Faina. "It can't hurt as much as that."

"I can't breathe," said Lutokhin.

The doctor read in the case book of slight wound and concussion . . . no attacks for the past two weeks . . . wound healing normally. In the hospital he had been given complete baths, as it had been observed that they improved his spirits.

"We have no baths," said the doctor. "A shower—certainly. Or you can have a hipbath."

"What the devil do I want with a shower!" cried Lutokhin, and swore. "I want to lie in a bath and go on lying there, devil take you all!"

And he began groaning louder than ever.

"Shut up, you phony," came a voice from the upper berth. "Comrade doctor, why do you bother with him? He's putting it all on".

The doctor asked for Lutokhin's temperature. The thermometer showed 37.1.

"There, you see!" said Lutokhin ominously.

Examination showed a slight rise in blood pressure, weakened reactions of the pupils to light and the bad breath usual in old and hardened smokers.

"Appetite good," said Faina. "Bowel movement normal."

"I assure you that there's nothing badly wrong," the doctor told Lutokhin. "You'll just have to be patient for the few days on the journey. In the hospital you'll be able to get baths again, and then you'll stand the heat better."

Lutokhin jumped and cursed heartily.

"Quiet, quiet," said the doctor. "There are women here."

He began to move away.

"Where are you going!" shouted Lutokhin. "Order me a shower!"

"Shower," said doctor, and Smirnova wrote: "Shower for No. 20."

"There's nothing to be done with him," said Faina.

The shower was ready in twenty minutes, but when Smirnova came for Lutokhin, he seemed to be asleep.

"Dozed off," said a neighbour. "As soon as you'd gone, he shut up and dozed. You shouldn't dance around him so much, he'd be all the better."

Lutokhin's face was buried in his pillow; all that was visible was the edge of a rosy cheek and an earlobe, like a cherry.

"Let him sleep," said Smirnova, and went away.

That was at about eleven in the morning. Just before dinner an amazed Faina ran to Dr. Belov and reported that Lutokhin was dead.

He had died of a brain hemorrhage.

This was the first death in the train, unless one counted the Pskov woman wounded in

the abdomen who had died on the operating table. But she had been dying when the dead laid her there.

Lutokhin's death left a sense of depression. Everybody had a feeling of guilt, although nobody was to blame. It had been one of those cases which science is unable to predict or prevent. Concussion sometimes does have these unexpected effects; death is cunning, it camouflages itself, conceals itself within the body of the patient and then, suddenly, seizing him by the throat, bares its teeth in triumph.

"In all probability," Dr. Belov thought painfully, "he should never have been moved from the hospital. It may be that the vibration of the train led to that disturbance of the brain that brought instant death. But who could foresee it? There had been no attack for two weeks, and he gave the impression of a healthy man. But maybe it's my fault, thought the doctor, trying to remember the details of his examination of Lutokhin. "I allowed myself to be deceived by superficial favourable signs, missed some very important unfavourable detail, and did not take measures. . . Yes, I did not attach sufficient importance to the bad reaction of his pupils to the light. I noticed it, I remember it very well, but I did not take any steps." The doctor knew that he could not have taken any radical steps, that it was an unusual case, a complicated one, deceptive, that only some medical genius could have predicted it—from some sort of inspiration, instinct. . . But nevertheless, the doctor's conscience tormented him.

"He probably has a wife and children," he thought. "A wife . . . children. . . And now they're orphans, just because an old useless doctor did not pay attention to the reaction of the pupils. If I am in trouble," thought the doctor, "why should others suffer on that account? Why should Lutokhin's wife and children suffer because of my grief? That's monstrous. If there was any punishment laid down for it, I ought to go and confess: sentence me, I let a man's life go because of my own personal grief; because of my grief the soldier Lutokhin, Ivan Mironovich, died. . . They would say that it's not my fault, that it was simply an unfortunate accident. If I could only believe that it really isn't my fault, how good that would be, how relieved I'd feel!"

And on the table, under the glass, lay a letter from an old partner in his games of preference, telling him that Sonechka and Lyalya had been killed by a bomb in one of the first raids on Leningrad in September 1941.

Translated by Eve Manning.

(To be continued.)

BOOKS AND WRITERS

GORKY AND SOCIALIST REALISM

Throughout his life, Gorky was profoundly interested in problems of the theory of art. His esthetic views were strongly influenced by Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov and were based on the revolutionary teachings of Marx and Lenin. Gorky had, moreover, a thorough knowledge of both ancient and modern esthetic theories prevailing in the West. A self-taught man, he made a profound study not only of literature but of music, architecture, painting and other arts. His school, as he himself points out in autobiographical works, was life itself.

Gorky set forth his views on art and literature in numerous writings which, collected, would comprise several volumes. Here we find his remarkable studies of Leo Tolstoy, Leonid Andreyev and Vladimir Korozenko, combinations of an analysis of the writers' personality and an appreciation of their art; here, too, is the course of lectures on Russian literature of the 18th and 19th centuries which he gave to Russian political immigrants on the island of Capri; here are his many articles dealing with literature written both before and after the Revolution, and his conversations and correspondence with young writers. His essays on painting, though written at an early period, are none the less significant. And finally, his correspondence and literary works contain many observations which are of paramount theoretical interest.

Gorky is the founder of the esthetics of socialist realism. This was no set of abstract canons, no proclamation by a group of litterateurs and critics out to dazzle the public with a new literary sensation. The esthetics of socialist realism grew out of the art experience of Gorky, the first and greatest writer of the new literary trend, and was the result of the development of Soviet literature. The theory is no metaphysical mind pattern, it is the essence of the development of literature in the great revolutionary transformation which has taken place in Russia. The fact that it had its origin in the experience of Soviet literature does not imply, however, that it is contained within narrow, national bounds. Soviet literature is multinational in itself. Furthermore, like all the great esthetical theories of the past, the esthetics of socialist realism go beyond its national experience to embrace the achievements of world art as a whole.

The rise of socialist realism, a new literary trend, does not imply a break with the traditions of the past. The leaders of the new literary schools of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries placed themselves in opposition to classical art; but Gorky, the leader of the school of socialist realism, countenanced no slighting of the

art and the literature of the past. Unlike adherents of modernistic and decadent groups who admitted no authority other than themselves, Gorky had the deepest reverence for the creations of the great artists who preceded him.

Gorky entertained a particularly profound love of Russian literature. He wrote: "In the history of European literature the birth of our literature was a remarkable event; it is no empty boast to say that no literature of the West ever rose with such force or such speed, in such a mighty and dazzling blaze of talent." Gorky held that Russian literature "has a greater universality of appeal than others; that the world, amazed at its majesty and power accorded it instant recognition. It has succeeded in depicting Russian womanhood, of whom the West had previously been ignorant. Russian literature alone is capable of speaking of mankind with the profound and tender love of a mother."

Gorky held in highest esteem the literature of critical realism, particularly the work of such writers as Stendahl, Balzac and Flaubert. Time and again he refers to the great value of the description of bourgeois society as given by the French, English and Russian realists of the 19th century. But, while appreciating the contribution of critical realism in throwing light on the defects of bourgeois society, Gorky does not consider it acceptable for socialist society, which requires an art that will assist it in the building of the new life.

At the first congress of Soviet writers in 1934, Gorky said: "We must realize that critical realism came into being as the individual creation of 'the marginal man' who, found wanting in the struggle for life and incapable of finding his place in it, and furthermore, having become aware, more or less, that his own life was leading nowhere, concluded that all social life and historical development had no purpose whatever. We have no intention of underrating the great work critical realism has done and we appreciate its accomplishments in the very art of writing. But we must remember that this realism can only assist us in depicting the defects of the past, that we may the better struggle against them and overcome them. However, this form of realism did not and cannot assist in the formation of the socialist individual; for it confined itself to criticism alone without attempting to formulate any positive belief, and in some cases even returned to a belief in the very tenets it denied."

In the same speech, Gorky said that Soviet life, which lays a new basis for human activity, offers the writer not only the traditional realist's position of being the "judge of the world and man", the "critic of life", but

also the right to be a direct factor in the building of the new life.

Art is not only the "mirror of nature", but an active factor in the transformation of the world. This axiom led Gorky to his conception that writers are "leaders of culture", engineers of the human soul. "Socialist realism," Gorky wrote, "presents *Being as action*, as creation aimed at the unbroken development of the finest individual traits of man, that he may triumph over the forces of nature, that he may enjoy health and long life, that he may realize the joy of living on an earth which by his ever-increasing requirements he is induced to transform into a splendid place for all mankind united into a single family."

Such art can arise only when the writer directs his activity into the stream of the people's effort to transform life. From the outset of his career, Gorky maintained contact with the revolutionary movement of the Russian workers. His was the poetic voice of their struggle for liberation, the storm-petrel of revolution. After the Revolution, Gorky continued to criticize capitalist society and to extol the new life in which the people is the master of its own destiny. Soviet writers follow in the steps of Gorky in placing their art at the service of the people. In war, literature becomes a weapon in the struggle against the country's enemies, in peace it lends its strength to the building of socialist society.

Gorky's esthetics is permeated with humanism. "Man—how proud the word rings!" became the foundation of all his work. But in a class society man is constrained, crushed under social inequality. He is worn away by poverty and bent by the burden of toil. It is a world of too much suffering and Gorky exclaims: "Suffering is the world's shame: we must learn to hate it and strive to abolish it." Gorky could see no poetry in suffering, and combatted the passive romanticism, which looked upon suffering as man's most poetic state. He speaks against the sentimentality and the fatalism he finds in the work of the Russian romantic poet, Zhukovsky, and says that Zhukovsky's "sentimentalism is one with his fear of death, and there is a kind of childish and primitive helplessness of thought that crawls through it. . . ."

Gorky offers the concept of activity in place of passive romanticism: "serve liberty, know everything, bend the knee to nothing!" However, his championship of freedom and exaltation of man had nothing in common with the individualism of the intellectual pure and simple. Gorky opposed philosophical individualism, which places the individual in opposition to society; his treatment of the bourgeois intellectual, Klim Samgin, illustrates his disapproval of such individualism.

The fetishism of things, which makes people the slaves of property is the essence of bourgeois society. Without realizing it himself at times, man in such a society becomes the slave to his own property or to the thing—he strives to make his own. In English literature, this subjugation of people to things

is excellently portrayed in Galsworthy's *For-sythe Saga*, particularly in the *Man of Property*.

The fetishism of things must be overcome if man is to be free. In his story *Chelkash*, Gorky writes: "What they (the people) themselves had built, enslaved them and drained them of all personality." We find the same thought in the stories of his travels in England and America. In *The City of the Yellow Devil* the people are gripped by the power of money, which has displaced the power of the land. They are serfs in the capitalist city, held "in thrall by the sombre phantasm of stone, iron and glass."

The only hope that Gorky sees of liberating man from the grip of things is by a change of social conditions. In 1925 in a preface to the American edition of Leonid Andreyev's *Sashka Zhigulev*, Gorky wrote: "Our world and our home is Earth, and all the other planets in the universe are as yet beyond our power to influence them. On our own earth, however, we could find comfort and happiness, could we but learn to treat each other with greater consideration, and could we but realize that the highest and finest being on earth is Man."

In the esthetics Gorky also attaches much importance to the relations between man and nature. "The poets of the past delighted in nature's beauty and nature's gifts whether as tillers of the soil or owners of the land and regarded themselves 'children of nature', but were in reality nature's slaves. In poetry that exalts nature we most frequently encounter submissiveness and flattery. Praise of nature is praise of a despot, and its tone is almost always that of a prayer. The poets are almost unanimous in concealing such harmful manifestations of nature as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, droughts and other eruptions and ravages of her blind forces that destroy thousands of lives and the fruits of human toil. In their attempts—not very successful attempts—to 'fire the hearts of men with the word',¹ or—again unsuccessfully—to inspire men's 'better feelings',² the poets have never roused man to the struggle against nature and for power over nature. In permitting themselves—infrequently—anger against two-legged despots, the poets' ire was never roused against the blind tyrant. . . . Gorky's mind revolted at this passive exaltation of nature. He saw nature as raw material, not as harmony. "Our task as human beings," he said, "is to work with and harmonize this raw material." Man must become not only the master of his own destiny and cease to be the slave of other men or the slave to things; neither must he be the slave of nature. In speaking of the San Francisco earthquake of forty years ago, Gorky said "I have faith in man's reason. I believe that he will come to know the nature of all things and will become the master of all things. I am sure that with time he will know what is taking place in the bowels of the earth . . . and he will be able to avert such misfortune as that which has overtaken San Francisco."

Gorky had faith in man's creative reason.

¹ From Pushkin's *The Prophet*

² From Pushkin's *The Monument*

he did not look upon the creative powers of reason as the play of fantasy and imagination, but as a force capable of achieving an understanding of the world and of changing it for the good of mankind.

The exaltation of reason occupies a significant place in Gorky's esthetics. With him reason is the implacable foe of the esthetics of decadence with its affirmation of irrationalism. It is worth recalling that Russian decadents at the time opposed Gorky's esthetics with principles strongly reminiscent of the anti-humanism and the irrationalism of Western decadents of our own day.

Gorky was resolutely opposed to the philosophy, esthetics and art productions of the decadents. In an article entitled, *Paul Verlaine and the Decadents*, he gives a profound analysis of this movement in literature. He rejected the amorality of the decadents and their brand of individualism, and felt that the decadents were a sign of decay and the degradation of individuality. Elsewhere he speaks directly against this "Destruction of the Individuality". Gorky objected to all kinds of formalistic trickery on the part of writers and modernistic poets, who attempted to conceal their vacuity and dearth of ideas behind a veil of flashy outward show. "Art must be clear. Its importance is too great to admit of excesses," Gorky wrote. "I do not deny the freedom of art, but I am definitely opposed to the freedom of indulging in excesses."

The exaltation of death and decline, so characteristic of the decadents, was subjected to sharp criticism by Gorky. He wrote a satirical story about a pessimistic philosopher who preaches "by leave of the authorities" that man is limited from without and limited from within, that nature is hostile to him, that woman is a blind instrument of nature; and that all this leads him to believe that life is meaningless. Even more satirical is the tale of the poet Smertyashkin (*Coffin-Cushion*) who begins his career by writing verses for the "Bureau of Anonymous Funeral Processions", and goes on to become the head of the school of pessimist poets.

Gorky justly points out that death is the eternal heroine of decadent poetry." In his superb story *The Girl and Death*, he attacks the decadent theory that the sole theme of art is love and death. In this story Gorky expresses his conviction that Life and Love will conquer Death. It is significant that one of the central figures in all of Gorky's art is that of the mother. Gorky looks upon motherhood as the symbol of the life-force. His favourite ideas are that love conquers death (as he shows in his works), that struggle and creation comprise man's immortality. In his memories of M. Kotsubinsky, Gorky quotes the words of the Ukrainian poet which indicate ideas identical with his own: "Death will be conquered when the majority of mankind attain a clear conception of the value of life, grasp all its beauty and experience the delight of working and living."

The prevailing cult in literary Europe during Gorky's youth was that of the *Flowers of Evil*. In Kazan, Gorky once attended a lecture given by a local esthete who spoke of the

"esthetics of the hideous." In Gorky's notes on this lecture we find: "Beauty in deformity?—that's a lie!" Gorky always had the greatest longing for beauty. In an early story he lauds beauty as the "embodiment of the poet's dream which entered those grim and heavy boulders appearing on this besmirched earth, to give life and nobility to everything around." The longing for beauty and the insatiable desire for the sublime is, Gorky believes, what produces art. In 1919 he wrote that art is permeated with "a desire that all men feel for something which cannot be captured by word or by thought, and scarcely by feeling as well—something mysterious to which we give the pale name of beauty; and that it flourishes in the world and in our hearts ever brighter and ever more splendid."

Gorky's conception of beauty flows from his humanism, his faith in man's omnipotence. He cannot imagine socialist realism without beauty, and his article *On Socialist Realism* written in 1933, begins with a definition of beauty: "We understand by beauty a combination of various textures, sounds, colours or words lending to the creation of the master a form which acts on the emotions and mind as a force moving people to astonishment, pride and joy in their ability to create."

With Gorky, man is the source of beauty; without man nature is a lifeless thing. "In the nature that surrounds us and is hostile to us there is no beauty. Beauty is created by man from the depths of his soul: thus the Finn transforms his bogs, his dark forests and granite crags where the stunted shrub struggles for a foothold; thus the Arab tells himself that his desert is beautiful. Beauty is born of man's desire to perceive it." This must not be taken as an indication of idealistic views on Gorky's part; for he never denied the reality of the world and life. To him they have always been the only and the greatest reality. But beauty is a spiritual concept. "Man born of Earth impregnates it with his mind and enriches it with the beauty of his imagination."

One of the ideas on which Gorky based his life and art is that of the majesty of human labour. In a speech delivered in Tbilisi in 1928, he said: "If I were a critic and were writing a book on Maxim Gorky, I should say that what made Gorky what he is today, a writer to whom you give so much (I fear, undeserved) honour and love, is that he is the first in Russian literature and perhaps the first man in the world who had such a personal and direct understanding of the enormous significance of labour, which has created everything that is valuable and beautiful, and everything that is great in the world."

Gorky exalts the free labour of the man who works for a society of people as free as himself. "Free labour is the fulcrum needed by Archimedes to move the world," Gorky said as far back as 1916. The only place where labour is free is in socialist society; for in capitalist society, millions are excluded from the "work of understanding the world." "Where labour is deprived of the right to think," as Gorky puts it, there can be no true poetry

of toil and labour becomes a burden and a curse. Under Soviet, socialist conditions, labour and thought go hand in hand. Labour becomes creative, as may be seen in the Stakhanovite movement to which Gorky attached the highest importance. He wrote: "The Stakhanovites have furnished us with visible proof that any man may be an artist in his work, if he so wishes."

That labour should form one of the central themes of Soviet literature, that is, of socialist realism, is something we should expect. It is based on the fact that in our country where every worker feels himself a free man, labour has become, as Stalin puts it, a matter of honour, a matter of glory and heroism. Gorky pointed out that "Soviet literature builds its esthetics on the epic heroism of the labour process and the class struggle. Once the victory in this struggle has been attained, the basis of esthetics will be the struggle against nature."

In his speech at the first congress of Soviet writers, Gorky, said: "The main theme of European and Russian literature of the 19th century was the individual as opposed to society, the state and nature. . . ." This literature showed the "drama of a man restricted by life, who feels he is outside the pale of society, who searches for a place in it and not finding one either suffers and dies, or makes his peace with a society hostile to him, sinks into a sodden torpor or commits suicide."

At the same time, Gorky pointed out that the rebel heroes in bourgeois literature who criticized their society, rarely exhibited any considerable awareness of their responsibility for the shameful practices of that society. "Even more rarely," he said, "do we find the main motive for the criticism of the existing order of things to be a profound and correct appreciation of the significance of the social-economic causes. The most frequent stimulus to their criticism was the sense of the hopelessness of their life confined within the narrow limits of capitalism, or the desire to avenge the failure of their lives and the indignities they were forced to suffer."

Gorky spoke to Soviet writers of the tasks which, he felt, should be the basis of their literary activity. "Labour must be the hero of our books, that is, the man who has been moulded in the processes of labour and who in turn makes labour easier and more productive, and finally elevates it to an art."

In bourgeois society the individual expresses himself best when he enters into conflict with that society and refuses to submit to its unjust laws, to its false and hypocritical morality. In socialist society, opposing the individual to the collective means the degradation of man; for the aim of socialism is the good of all mankind. Whoever refuses to lend his efforts to the labour of all becomes anti-social and an amoral creature. Active participation in the general labour of the collective of free individuals, on the other hand, exalts and ennobles the individual.

Gorky never subscribed to the prevalent opinion that human nature is unchangeable. "In the Soviet land," he said, "a new man is being born." This man is tearing himself

free from the bonds of the individualistic attitude towards life. Collective humanism forms the basis of his conduct; the stimulus for labour is no longer the thirst for personal enrichment but the desire to bring about the general good. This is a source of a mass heroism never before seen in history—a heroism that appeared with such remarkable force in the war fought by the Soviet people against fascist Germany. Such heroism was a part of Soviet life long before the war. It appeared during the first years of the revolution, when the badly shod, hungry, poorly armed men of the Red Army withstood the attacks of the fourteen foreign states against their young republic. The years of economic rehabilitation and the industrialization of the country that followed produced a mass labour heroism which likewise had never been seen before. During the war against fascist Germany, the millions of Soviet workers continued and enriched their noble tradition of labour heroism.

Mass heroism in labour and in the struggle for liberation were admired above all by Gorky. His study of Soviet life led him to believe that it required heroic poetry for its expression. "An heroic cause demands heroic words," he wrote. In this connection Gorky advanced the idea of reviving the epic. "I am convinced," he said, "that our working people, our new, free toilers on this earth will soon make their appearance in all fields of art, and that we are on the eve of the emergence of some form of collective art creation. We must do everything to aid its appearance." He suggested writing a "History of Factories and Plants," pointing out that it might be an indication of the "growing mass heroic epic." "The history of factories," he went on, "must be a means to the understanding of today as well as yesterday. This is why new epic is being born in the history of the factories; but instead of being based on mythology, it has its source in the free, happy and scientific practice of the millions who are building socialism, this new political reality who are building the future of mankind."

The foreign reader may gather from this the reason for the remarkable interest in industrial themes among Soviet writers.

Gorky evinced an intense interest in folklore. He insisted that even centuries of slavery cannot crush a people's desire for poetic expression. Under Soviet conditions Gorky justly saw an opportunity for a new flourishing of the poetic art of the people. In Soviet literature, Gorky thought, must be fused with the elemental force of folklore which flowers in Soviet conditions. This is particularly noticeable in the culture of the eastern peoples of the U.S.S.R., where the poetry of the bards, passed on by word of mouth, flourishes to this day. However, folklore is alive and developing among the Russian people as well. Bazhov's splendid book of Urals tales, *The Malachite Casket*,¹ a splendid illustration of Gorky's assertion that unwritten folk poetry is the source of the literature of books and that writers should return to this fountainhead.

¹ See *International Literature*, No. 10, 1934.

In romanticism and realism Gorky saw the two basic currents in all literature. "Realism," he wrote, "is a truthful and unvarnished account of people and their lives. There are a number of definitions of romanticism, but as yet none had been found to satisfy all literary historians. Romanticism contains two distinct currents. Passive romanticism attempts either to reconcile man to the reality around him by colouring that reality or by diverting him from it towards introspection, towards thoughts of the 'eternal mysteries of life,' love, death—mysteries solvable not by reasoning or reflection, but by science alone. Active romanticism strives to fortify man to undertake the tasks of life, to rouse him to rebellion against reality and all forms of oppression."

Gorky came out strongly against passive romanticism as expressed in the works of European romantics of the beginning of the 19th century and the passive romanticism of modern esthetes and decadents. Revolutionary romanticism, however, was a feature of his own work and is seen with particular clarity in his early stories and tales.

Gorky felt that socialist literature should be based on a fusion of realism and revolutionary romanticism. "My impression is that 'realism' might cope with its difficult task if in analyzing the individuality in its formation along the path from the old philistine, callous individualism to socialism, it would depict man not only as he is today but as he should and will be tomorrow."

Anticipating opposition from those insisting on the one-sided view that realism is a method of describing only what exists, Gorky goes on to explain: "This does not mean that I would have anyone 'manufacture a man out of whole cloth,' but rather that I recognize literature's right, and even consider it its duty to anticipate what man will be. The writer must learn to attribute and to instil in his character the outstanding traits of his class, both good and bad, when he wishes to reveal the duality of his psychology. I repeat, there is no need to fabricate them for these qualities exist in reality... Ideas are created on earth, their source is the life of toil, they may be attained through observation, comparison and study, and in the final analysis through facts, facts!"

Socialist realism must be fused with the romanticism of life, and not with the romanticism which is the product of the imagination. Hence, Gorky urged for a search of a "union of realism and romanticism fused into

a third factor capable of depicting the heroic age in brighter colours and speaking of it in a more elevated and fitting tone." The philistine, even the intellectual philistine, can have no conception of this heroic element of life, for he believes that the highest form of intellectual activity is scepticism. Gorky spoke out against such people as early as 1905. "What can the philistine do?" he wrote at the time. "He is no hero and the heroic is something he does not understand. The philistine is ever the lyricist, the sublime is utterly alien to him, he is fettered by helplessness when he comes in contact with it." Gorky felt that the heroes brought into being by Soviet reality must be depicted as "higher and greater than all the heroes of all peoples and times." And he added (this was written in 1933): "Is this romanticism? I believe not. This seems to me to be socialist realism—the realism of people who change and transform the world. It is realistic thought enriched with imagination and based on socialist experience."

Socialist realism is distinguished from the old critical realism by the direction of its efforts towards the future. The critical realists criticized the reality of their day in the light of the past, in which they found their ideal. For Balzac this ideal was the feudal-catholic monarchy, for Dickens it was "merry England", the England of Christmas carols and bells, for Tolstoy, it was the patriarchal life of the peasants. But socialist realists call the reader to the future, not to the past. "Socialist realism is distinguished from Balzac and the 'classic' realism of the 19th century," Gorky wrote, "in its orientation on the future. Past realism had no future, and was aware of it. Our realism has a 'guaranteed' future...."

Soviet literature developed along the lines of the esthetics of socialist realism of which Maxim Gorky was the first theoretician. This does not mean that it is confined to the narrow tenets of a literary school pledged to a definite theoretical programme. The very programme of socialist realism is so broad that it presents boundless horizons for the individual inclinations of the writer. Its guiding principle is not the so-called freedom of art which agitates the apostles of individualism who are personally prejudiced; but the real social freedom, achieved by a people which has crushed class antagonism and oppression in its country. This is the soil on which socialist realism has flourished, a realism which, to use Gorky's apt phrase, has a "guaranteed future".

ALEXANDER ALEXANDROV



Grossman is now 41 years old. He was born in the Ukraine in 1905—the year of the first Russian revolution. His childhood and youth passed amidst the rumble of war: at first the World War I and then the Civil War in Russia. A trained mathematician, Grossman who has held jobs as a chemical engineer and an expert on safety devices in mining, spent 10 years working in the Donets coal field. For a while he was head of the laboratory at the Smolyanka II Mine near Stalino. He has two scientific works to his credit: *On the Content and Origin of Carbon Monoxide in Coal Mines*, and *Methane and Its Sudden Escapes in Coal Mines*. During his stay in the Donbas he wrote his first essays and short stories.

In 1934, Grossman having had the misfortune to contract tuberculosis, was forced to relinquish his work in the Donets coal field and took up residence in Moscow. Soon after, his first stories (*Gluck-auf* and others) began to appear in Moscow newspapers and magazines.

In May of that same year, Grossman made the acquaintance of Maxim Gorky. How many of our Soviet writers date their entry into literature from their friendship with Gorky! Ever on the lookout for people tempered in life's hard school, Gorky immediately noticed the budding author. One evening he read Grossman's first stories and then and there decided to meet him. At that time Gorky lived in the country just outside Moscow where he was always surrounded by a crowd of people, mostly writers who gave him no rest. Grossman recalls with gratitude how Gorky led him upstairs to his study where they had a long conversation. Their talk was not about literature or about Grossman's writings, they discussed happiness, science, God, the inherent Russian leaning towards philosophy. Before leaving, Grossman asked: "I am an engineer: shall I give up my profession?" "By all means, give it up," answered Gorky and his words were like a blessing to the young author setting out on a literary career.

Among Soviet writers we know of three who were also engineers and who found material for their books in their original profession. These are representatives of three generations of Soviet engineers: Boris Zhitkov, who belongs to the older generation, a marine engineer, wrote wonderful books for children combining his experiences at sea with valuable technical information; the young engineer Krymov, who wrote two books about Soviet engineers and left a document of great force in the form of his *Letters From the Front* which were found pierced by a German bullet and stained with the blood of this soldier author. Between these two representatives of the older and the younger generations of engineers in Soviet literature stands Grossman.

His first long novel *Stepan Kolchugin* was a book about life in the Donets Basin about coal and miners. The ten years of his life spent amongst the miners, all his observations and thoughts, Grossman put into this book. The hero is the son of a miner, who in his early childhood searched amid the slag for the coveted "white stone" and later got a job at a blast furnace; a scion of the working class, he was possessed by that thirst for knowledge so typical of the Russian worker, and he had the miner's complete lack of fear for those in office above him—high or low.

Perhaps, one might say that in a way Grossman's novel was a repetition of Gorky's *Mother*. Both related the story of a young worker-revolutionary, many of the characters, events and situations were similar. But in writing his novel, Gorky was a propagandist, a revolutionary, in it he brought us the spring of the revolution, the first workers' demonstration, the red flag waving defiantly in the breeze and calling upon all to follow it to a beautiful but still unknown future. Grossman, on the other hand, wrote his book after 20 years of Soviet rule, when the events which he described had already become a part of history and had been proved by the reality of the Revolution: he knew both the road along which Stepan would travel and the goal which he would reach. The writer tried to analyze the whole of this road, he was interested in the man, the type, in his growth and development.

The story of Kolchugin is the growth of a personality, the creation of a type of worker-revolutionary, of a Bolshevik; it is an analysis of the influences and education which determined his character.

Slowly and painstakingly the author collects all the traits and features that go to form this character like the tiny, multi-coloured stones which make up the pattern of a mosaic. Here are Stepan's first childish reactions: the coal mine is home to him, the miners are all members of one huge family. This impression is confirmed and strengthened when the boy gets his first job in the iron and steel works. Despite the hard work, the boy sees how labour brings joy to the working man, he observes the pride and happiness of the old craftsman Myata when the furnace

yields good metal; he is aware that the old man knows the secrets of the blast furnace, the secret of good work, and that this knowledge brings him joy. Pride in his craft, in the blast furnace, so characteristic of the working man, develops early in Stepan and enables him to reach quickly the level of the veteran, experienced masters, who, sensing this pride in the boy, begin to respect him.

This interest in his work rouses an interest in the world at large, a thirst for knowledge. Very beautifully Grossman shows us that precious Lomonosov trait of all gifted Russians—the eager, almost ecstatic admiration for knowledge, for educated people, for books.

To Stepan, the plant laboratory is a palace of wonders and his unexpected, voluntary teacher, a frail vessel full of amazing secrets that has to be treated with great care.

However, when these secrets are revealed to him, when only a corner of the veil has been raised from the mystery—with the first rules of arithmetic, the first knowledge of physics and chemistry—the boy is overwhelmed by a feeling of the amazing novelty, and yet simplicity of it all, by an overpowering feeling of freedom.

Later when other teachers—men and women who devoted their lives to the revolutionary education of the people—explained the social structure of the world to Kolchugin, an ardent desire for action was added to that first feeling of inner freedom. But since work was the foundation of his life, he took both his studies and his revolutionary activities as a solemn duty. In calm, businesslike fashion he executed missions entrusted to him by the Bolshevik Party, a basket of type for the underground printshop was a basket of tools that had to be delivered for a great and useful work.

To this consciousness and inner integrity Grossman adds purity and strength of feeling. Like an exacting and imperious mistress, love enters into the life of the youth. The preparations for the first appointment, the clean shirt and new suit, then the first, bashful walks in the countryside, arm-in-arm with the girl who is clearly more daring and enterprising than the boy; the timidity and awkwardness and the awakening of the first youthful passion that clenches hands and teeth, the first rendezvous at an abandoned shaft, in the steppe, in a strange room—this passion is so pure and strong that it has no need of seductive surroundings, of appropriate adornments.

But the ingrained habit of work has matured the boy beyond his years and he dreams of his sweetheart as his wife and helpmate, he dreams of a family, a "miner's family". Consequently, the unexpected jilting and the collapse of all these unchildlike dreams, is a deep and bitter shock, bitter sorrow.

The author, however, does not allow himself to be carried away by a naturalistic description of the every-day life of his hero, although he shows us the week-days and Sundays, the blast furnaces, the mining village. With almost mathematical accuracy he sketches the path travelled by his hero, cleverly and somewhat tersely leads the read-

er as an engineer leads a visitor through a familiar and beloved factory, arousing interest in that which is of interest to himself.

While following the experiences of the young Kolchugin, accumulating, as it were, the traits that go to make up his character, the reader waits impatiently for the end of this preparatory period, for the beginning of the action, the life for which the author is shaping Stepan. Perhaps only at the cross-examination in the prison do we finally catch the first glimpse of the matured character, reflected primarily in the words and actions of the examining judge, and reaching us through the medium of the fierce anger which Kolchugin's calm, confident and disdainful answers arouse in the policeman.

The novel ends at the moment when Kolchugin, freed from prison, reads in a newspaper that the Austrian archduke has arrived in Sarajevo.

Grossman's second novel (he had planned a trilogy) was called *Soldiers of the Revolution* and was a book about the war of 1914.

He knew of this war only from the stories told by veterans who had taken part in it; he himself was only nine years old when it began. Nevertheless the book contains pages of remarkable power and vision: for instance, a lasting impression is made by the description of the arrival of a new echelon at the front—the last railroad ending in an open field of wet, black earth, peaceful under the autumn sky, the feeling of the mysterious front somewhere nearby, and the first senseless and terrible battle.

In this book the fate of the characters of *Stepan Kolchugin* merges with the general fate of the people and the country; the youths of the first book have grown to maturity, ties and sympathies have taken root and the old way of life, shattered by the war, is rolling swiftly towards its inevitable end.

...Grossman told me that recently, on returning from the front after more than four years with the army, he opened his old "war" book with a feeling of apprehension. "I thought that it would now appear unconvincing and unreal to me and I saw with surprise that there was much in it that was exact and true," he said.

The novel was never finished. On June 21st, 1941, fascist Germany attacked the U.S.S.R. and on July 28th Grossman was already in the field as a war correspondent for the newspaper *Red Star*. He spent the autumn of 1941 with the troops in the Ukraine, with them he experienced the bitterness of the retreat and the longing to advance, to drive the enemy from his native soil. In the spring of 1942, he was given leave in order to work on a book. In a little Tatar town on the river Kama, Grossman worked feverishly night and day, and in two and a half months' time finished *The People Is Immortal*.¹ This was the first novel about the Patriotic War, about the first stages of this war, and it was a genuine war book. In his earlier works Grossman had shown us factory life with the

¹ The excerpts of this novel were published in the magazine *International Literature* No. 1, 1943

skill and assurance of an engineer acquainted with every detail; in this book he showed us the war, as a genuine military specialist; we understand the success or failure of each operation, we picture the "encirclement", we understand the meaning of "circular defense", of discipline in the army, the role of the commander and how victory was won.

Bogarev, the hero of this story, is not an industrial worker as was the case in Grossman's earlier books. Nor is he a seasoned soldier. This is a scientist, a professor, a Communist.

War comes to the country and from the quiet university halls, Bogarev sets out for the dust-filled dangerous front-line roads, where death lurks at every turn. Not only does he fight and fight well—he reflects upon the war, endeavouring to understand it so as to fight still better, in order to conquer. He is a thinker, a theoretician, a scientist who must explain this war to himself and to others. Through the medium of his hero, Grossman explains this war to his readers.

A representative of the new Soviet intelligentsia, Bogarev has a kinship with Grossman himself. His reflections—and the book is replete with them—about culture, the people and the war are, quite plainly, reflections which are near and dear to Grossman.

The enemy could wreck homes and cities, he could destroy fields and farms and annihilate human beings, but he never did and never shall be able to destroy a great people—"the people is immortal." Both Bogarev and Grossman think and feel this.

Written on an emotional, lyrical note, many of the pages breathe of the author's tender love for the Russian countryside, for the golden-tinted autumn lands of the Ukraine, they ring with a proud admiration for the brave and faithful Soviet men and women.

Honestly and truthfully, and with crystal-clear purity, Grossman portrays in this book the thoughts and feelings of a Soviet intellectual turned soldier.

Now that the war is over and many things have been told and explained, we can also see the shortcomings in Grossman's book: a certain lack of pliancy, of clearly assigned motives, of vital characteristics. Bogarev discourses in too bookish a style, we do not see or know how he became a military man, we see him teaching others but do not know how he learned to fight. We are presented with his conclusions in finished form and do not see how he drew them from the experiences of war, and this, perhaps, would interest the reader most: to see how, in spite of the retreat and the enemy's superiority in armaments, the confidence in ultimate victory is born in our soldiers and officers.

The author is so engrossed in the war, in his thoughts about it and his feelings towards it, that he involuntarily hides his heroes and thinks, feels and speaks for them.

The reader finds it easier to understand the secondary personages in the novel: Mertsalov, the battalion commander and a Hero of the Soviet Union, an ardent and daring man who rushes into battle at the head of his

men and only later realizes that this is not enough, that leadership in battle is not confined to running in front of the battalion; and the Red Army scout Ignatyev who, with pain and anger in his heart, watches from his cover how the Germans make themselves at home in a captured village; and the old woman Cherednichenko, breathing dignity and courage in the face of death.

The People Is Immortal is a book of great sincerity, it is almost a documentary record of one who took part in the titanic battles for the Soviet land. Practically, neither time nor space divided the author from that which he described.

It should be mentioned that Grossman's novel written during winter 1941-42, was the first big book about the war to be written in Soviet literature, and already by its title it confirmed the inflexible belief of Soviet citizens in their country, in their people in the truth of that for which they were fighting.

Having submitted his book to the publishers, Grossman set out for Stalingrad in August, 1942, and remained there throughout the battle. There, in the besieged stronghold amid the burnt-out and ice-coated ruins of the city, Grossman wrote his famous *Stalingrad Sketches* which combined a vivid and accurate description of the military operations and a serious and profound analysis of their role in the war, with a passionate tenderness for the ordinary Russian soldier.

At first he found it difficult to write under battle conditions but gradually he grew accustomed to them and the stories such as *The Direction of the Main Drive* which took up an entire page in the newspaper *Pravda*, were written in a dugout full of sleeping, talking singing men, by the light of an improvised lamp made of a shell case. Grossman called Stalingrad a laboratory, a test-chamber where war came into contact with the entire past of the country, where the qualities of Russian people and the military might of the U.S.S.R. were put to the test, where psychologically men travelled the entire road of war—from retreat to victory.

Stalingrad Sketches are the most powerful of all Grossman's writings. Perhaps they are so powerful because the fire and frost of Stalingrad purged all immature thoughts, all false feelings, all literary considerations, all superfluous words, and only the necessities remained, pure and firm as steel and direct as a sniper's bullet.

At present, Grossman is working on a novel about the people of Stalingrad.

A review of Grossman's works would not be complete without mention of those wartime writings which ring with anguished pain for those who, mutilated and suffering, perished in the terrible "death camps", in empty fields, at the stake, in ditches and gulches. These are the stories *Life*¹ and *The Old Teacher*.

The Old Teacher is the story of a small town and of a certain large apartment house in this town, in which among many others lived an eighty-year-old Jewish teacher, who

¹ See *International Literature* No. 9, 1942

in his time had taught almost the whole population of the town. The Germans come and sow their poison in the quiet town, incite man against man, brother against brother. They appoint a day for the "stamping out" of the Jewish population. Full of supreme human dignity, the old teacher goes to his doom, and his only comfort at the last moment is a little child that covers his eyes with its tiny hand that he may not see the horrors that are being wrought on earth.

The story is full of grief and the old man's words about the "ladder of oppression" on which the Jewish people stand on the lowest rung are a direct reproach to humanity.

Finally there is Grossman's booklet, consisting of sixty-three tiny pages that contain material of terrific power: this is *The Treblinka Hell*,¹ a heart-rending story about Treblinka, the death camp in Poland.

Here the merciless eye of the engineer, accustomed to mathematical accuracy, helps the author to reproduce all the circles of this terrestrial hell, the like of which even the imagination of the most frantic medieval fanatic could not have conceived.

Before the eyes of the reader lies the dreary landscape of stunted pines, sand and heather, the railway tracks and the "single-gauge branch line cutting a narrow path between the trees into the heart of the forest, towards the sand quarries." We see the long line of countless carriages, passenger and freight-cars, loaded with human beings doomed to a terrible death; we hear the unbearable blare of the brass band which greets the victims on the Treblinka platform; together with them we travel the last road from the station to the sand-strewn avenue, bordered on either side with flower-beds and little fir trees, to

the beautiful stone building of the "gas-chamber" that resembles an ancient temple.

Grossman forces us to see the accurately packed sacks full of women's hair, the cashier's desk at which the naked people had to leave their rings, earrings, wrist-watches, crosses and bracelets, and the gigantic mechanical grave-digger—the excavator that rattled and screeched from morning till night as it dug the huge graves, and the dreadful man-eating dogs, and the fat, lazy Treblinka flies. . . .

This makes horrible reading.

"I ask the reader to believe me," writes Grossman, "that this is also terrible to write about. . . It is the duty of the writer to tell the whole, frightful truth, and it is the reader's duty as a citizen to learn it."

Grimly and brutally, striving to be exact, Grossman writes about this hell, and only now and again we feel his profound sorrow.

"The work of burning the corpses was proceeding apace. For nearly six months already, the furnaces roared night and day. . . The slag and ashes were carted away, beyond the camp boundaries. . . And the ashes had settled on the road, giving it the appearance of a black, mourning ribbon. The wheels of vehicles driving over this road rustled in a peculiar way, and when I drove over it I heard this sad rustling from under the wheels all the time, barely audible like a meek complaint. . . ."

The rustle of these ashes, like the ashes of Klaas, "knocks at the heart."

The voice of the Soviet writer Vassili Grossman, who has reached his prime in the years of war, has sounded throughout the world—a proud voice full of wrath and truth.

¹ See *International Literature* No. 6, 1945

VERA SMIRNOVA

NEW BOOKS

Alexander Blok. *Our Native Land*. Arranged and prefaced by Vladimir Orlov. *State Literary Publishing House*. Moscow. 245 pages.

Once when Alexander Blok was reciting his own poems and the audience called for something about Russia he replied: "They are all about Russia."

The homeland regarded as a human being, the image of Russia resembling the image of one beloved, of a wife—all this passes through the creative art of this great poet. Russia forms the central image not only in the poems dealing directly with this theme but in all his lyrics. The entire fabric of Blok's verses creates an expressive picture of Russian life at the beginning of the present century. The poet's profound faith in the future of his country never falters. The source of his belief in a new virile Russia lay in the Russian people. Regret for the people's destiny and wrath for those dishonouring the homeland and oppressing the people coloured Blok's outlook in the period between the 1905 and the October revolutions. He "could not bear

the surrounding gloom," but with Russia, he wrote, "the impossible is possible." In the sombre night of a black reaction he described above Russia "a spreading smouldering fire," he saw into her revolutionary future.

"But I recognize you, the beginning
Of great and turbulent days. . . ."

And when the October Revolution really arrived Blok hailed it as the beginning of a new era.

And if the poetic sense of the approaching revolution as an elemental cataclysm, a "world conflagration" was in Blok's case somewhat abstract and coloured by mysticism, he certainly made no mistake in the fundamentals—in understanding the revolutionary will of the people, their great moral and creative strength, that right was on their side.

These form the main points of V. Orlov's interesting article *Alexander Blok and Russia*, the preface to a small volume of Alexander Blok's poems *Our Native Land*. They include most of his poems which strikingly depict his "fearless sincerity", his humanism, dem-

ocratic sentiments and his constant concern for his country's fate and confidence in her future.

Here are scenes from the fetid and gloomy life of pre-revolutionary times (*On the Railway, A Cold Day*) and a number of poems (*On Kulikovo Field, Russ, Russia, The New America* and others). In these a direct lyric and poeticized image of Russia is given. Here are verses in which the social theme is more manifest (*The Vulture* and excerpts from *Retribution*). The section of the volume containing the poems finishes with *The Twelve*, available to English readers in translation.

The volume contains Alexander Blok's last big work, *The Scythians* (also translated into English). It was written in 1918 on hearing of the threatened German offensive on revolutionary Petrograd. It is a patriotic ode in which the poet again turns to the subject of his country's destiny.

Of exceptional interest is the second part of the book under the heading: "Russia, the Russian people and Russian culture". This is made up of excerpts from Alexander Blok's articles, his diaries and letters which round off the poems, revealing their meaning. They have the same deep sincerity, but here in prose, "the presentiments and harbingers" of the future are formulated even more clearly. The poet has understood the full grandeur of the present epoch ("All will be well. Russia will be Great."—note from 22/4/17). The poet speaks affectionately of the national "synthetic culture" of his "young country" that had produced "the great vital force of Tolstoy," "the noble endeavour" and "the boundless ideal of Gorky. . . ."

The poet returns time and again to the role of the artist. "The artist," he says, "is bound to see what is being conceived, hear the music ringing in the wind-torn air." What was conceived?—asks Blok, and finds plain, understandable and correct words to tell what was being conceived in Russia at that time (the excerpt quoted belongs to 1918):

"To change everything. To build so that everything was new, so that our false, foul, weary, ugly life becomes just, clean, happy and splendid."

TALES OF DIFFERENT TIMES

Nikolai Nikitin. *Tales of Different Times*. Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow. 138 pages.

The collection has two sections; one is devoted to the Great Patriotic War and the other contains stories written at different times and on various topics. Among them are reminiscences of the October Revolution in 1917, a short story about the last years of Dumas Père, recollections of Alexei Tolstoy, the famous Russian writer who died recently, and a tale about circus life.

What is the factor linking all these very different stories? Primarily it lies in the style. Each of Nikitin's stories is a miniature portraying the culminating point in a person's life: a fighting man (*Tale of a Sailor*), a young woman worker (*Maria*), an old collective farmer (*Grandfather and Grandson*), an actor (*Jim*). The heroes of these stories are shown us at moments when they have to exert

the greatest effort of will or are under terrific stress of emotion.

Nikitin's stories are laconic, his style brief. He does not so much narrate as compel the reader to guess what lies behind the short, fragmentary phrases of the characters, the dry remarks of the author reminding us of Chekhov's style of novel writing. The storm of inner emotions veiled by the web of events is strongly felt in Nikitin's war stories, showing Soviet people in action both at the front and in the rear.

A deep impression is made by *Meeting in Kurmyzh* and *A Winter's Day in Kurmyzh*, showing the war effort in the remote countryside where the war had left only old men, women and children. They were helped by children rescued from besieged Leningrad and by intelligentsia evacuated from the war zones. Scientists and artists who had known nothing but city life, went out with the villagers to till the fields with their own hands. They built a home for the Leningrad children, cared for the little unfortunates whom war had torn from their parents. The writer fully understands child psychology and is able to convey this knowledge to the reader.

The stories contained in the second part of the collection take us back to past times with such heroes as Private Egor Petrov, who fought for the Soviets in Petrograd in 1917, Alexei Tolstoy and Gorky (*In the Home of Art*). Nikitin gives a subtle portrayal of the care-free soldier who quite accidentally drops into a hall where Gorky is reading his works and listening, senses new horizons opening before him.

N. Nikitin's short stories are absorbing and written in masterly style.

TALES OF BESIEGED LENINGRAD

Alexander Rosen. *Three stories*. State Literary Publishing House. Leningrad. 127 pages.

All three stories in this book are about Leningrad during the Patriotic War.

The first and the most interesting is *A Winter's Night* describing the life of Leningrad citizens during the siege. The heroine is Anna Evdokiynova, a schoolteacher, who gives herself heart and soul to her job: a lonely woman, her whole life is wrapped up in her work with the children. When siege conditions force the school to close down, she gathers the children at her home, setting up something like a school there. The knowledge of the importance of her job gives her strength to endure hunger, cold and sleepless nights.

The author gives a superb portrayal of life in the embattled city—the emptiness and gloom, the shattering outbursts of shell fire, the drone of German aircraft, and the besieged people making their way laboriously through the streets.

The other two stories show modest heroes devoting their lives to their country. One such is Captain Abaturov who drives the Germans out of the village where he had left his wife. With shrinking heart he walks along the familiar, now deserted street, reaches his home, only to find it empty. At last haggard people begin to come out of their bomb shel-

ters. From them the captain learns that his wife has been shipped off to Germany. Now the captain is fighting for his country and for the person he loves most of all.

NEW BOOKS OF VERSE

Semyon Kirsanov. *War Verses*. Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow. 134 pages.

Lighting upon another slim volume of Kirsanov's, the reader generally expects to find something new in the way of poetic style, a characteristic trait in the creative effort of this poet. But his verses written during the war are straightforward and clearer than anything Kirsanov had done before. This collection also contains poems of interest mainly from the point of view of form and those rhetoric bugle and drum pieces so typical of the poet like *Strike from the Sky, Halt and Yield Not an Inch!*

But there are far more poems full of lyricism and simplicity: *A Handful of Earth, Children, A Man, Grandad*. Some of these like *Father and Son, Soldier, and Battle Mittens* just ask to be put to music while others are directly entitled: *The Song of Men on Earth, The Song of the March* and others. The song form, so widely used by poets during the war, is given great variety of rhythm by Kirsanov.

The collection has excerpts from *The Ardent Words of Foma Smyslov, Veteran Russian Soldier* which was printed in leaflet form for the Red Army. Serving as propaganda, they are written in conversational-narrative form in rhyme, seasoned with folk humour, full of common sense and obviously familiar with life in the firing line. They proved exceptionally popular with the men and many expressions from *Foma Smyslov* have become popular sayings.

Evgeni Dolmatovsky. *Verses From Afar*. Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow. 88 pages.

Evgeni Dolmatovsky is thirty and but a few years ago belonged to the "juniors". He has made great strides during the war which he spent in the army right from the beginning to the very end which he celebrated in Berlin. En route he wrote five books of verse. His new book contains poems written during the final phase of the war when the Red Army was fighting on enemy territory, moving ever nearer to victory, when everyone thought more and more often of how he would "build his home again...."

In Dolmatovsky's poems the world looms already purified by "the spent storm." The poet visualizes this from afar, from the battle storm still surging around him.

Dolmatovsky's manner of giving concrete material details is apparent in these poems as well. His mood and what he observes is generally linked with a vivid plastic image.

With a single detail he is able to conjure up an entire scene:

Torpid smoke wreathes along the ruined
street,
Moth-like ashes flutter and sail through
the air

A solitary gun

Scans signboards in Polish with a one-

eyed stare. Through every-day personal belongings: a pipe, a jack-knife, a spoon, a sweetheart's photograph, and even a packet of concentrated soup, the poet conveys the picture of the man ever on the move, subject to all the fortunes of war.

Mikhail Lvov. *My Comrades*. Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow. 73 pages.

Mikhail Lvov's book of poems *My Comrades* is about callow youths maturing to manhood. The author belongs to the younger generation of Soviet poets but he's been through the war and returned victorious. He exclaims: "How many lands lie behind you! How many miles and roads!"

This poet's first book includes some of his pre-war efforts and it is interesting to note how the war purged his work of bookishness and literary reminiscences.

Ilya Avramenko. *Fair Wind*. Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow. 117 pages.

Avramenko's collection of poems falls decidedly into two sections; the first deals with compositions of peace time: *Beyond the Stone Wall of Chike-Taman*, while the second section contains war poems: *In Army Greatcoat*.

Landscapes of Siberia, Oirotia and Altai Territory are all reflected by the poet in the first section of the book. "The smell of the forest and natural honey," "the fragrant smoke of the camp fires," "the amber glint of sunset on the crest of the mountains," "the haunting rustle of the taiga on mountain heights," "lush meadow on the slopes of the Altai, the shallows of the River Katun," "the steaming tea" in the hospitable yurt (felt tent) of the nomad—all these are drawn in calm, rhythmic serene lines.

Then comes the abrupt switch-over to the north and war—the poet was on the Lenin-grad front. "We'll surely never forget how the Neva's water froze in the pipes."

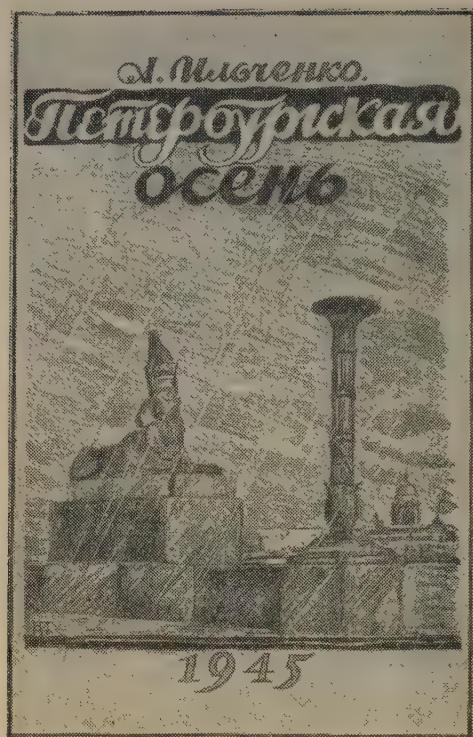
The war verse, however, retains the same thoughtful, slow rhythm. They convey the impression of an epic with their hard, somewhat blurred outlines of events. But a contrast is afforded in the dynamic concluding poem *The Eve of Immortality*, dedicated to a handful of men who gave battle to one hundred fifty fascists.

A STORY ABOUT TARAS SHEVCHENKO

Alexander Ilchenko. *Autumn in Petersburg*. A Novel. Translated from the Ukrainian by A. Beletsky and R. Samarin. State Literary Publishing House. Moscow. 247 pages.

The book is dedicated to Taras Shevchenko (1814—1861), the great Ukrainian poet who struggled so passionately against serfdom and despotism.

Shevchenko was the son of a serf and himself a serf of the landlord, Engelhardt. When still a boy Shevchenko displayed remarkable artistic talent and his master sent him to Petersburg to study painting. There he was fortunate in making the acquaintance of the artists Bryullov and Venetsianov. They recognized his exceptional talent and arranged his release from bondage (for 2,500 roubles).



Cover for *AUTUMN IN PETERSBURG*

Shevchenko gained his freedom in 1838, entered the Academy of Arts and at the same time devoted himself to writing poetry. *Kobzar*, a collection of poems and songs in Ukrainian, appeared in 1840 and at once placed him among the classics of world literature. His poetic talent was greatly influenced by Russian literature for which he always had a strong admiration. Typical subjects for Shevchenko the democrat and revolutionary were the oppression of serfdom (*Gaidamaki*); the hard lot of the peasant woman (*Naimichka*, *Katerina*); hatred of tsarism (*Slumber*); the call to the battle for freedom (*The Caucasus*).

In 1847, Shevchenko was arrested for his connection with a secret society in Kiev whose objects were to end serfdom and spread knowledge. He was then exiled to a remote fortress at Orenburg (now Chkalov) where he had to serve as a private "under strict surveillance and was forbidden to write or draw."

Not until 1857, after ten years of barrack-drill was Shevchenko allowed to return home and that only on the insistence of Fyodor Tolstoy, Chairman of the Academy of Arts.

Ilchenko's story *Autumn in Petersburg* reflects only one year in Shevchenko's life (1858), the year he returned from exile and lived in Petersburg at the Academy of Arts under the protection of Fyodor Tolstoy who had a fatherly regard for him.

The author depicts Shevchenko broken by his trials, a man prematurely aged. Although kindly and mild, especially towards children, he was prone to furious outbursts of wrath

for those who had ruined his life and the lives of people similarly situated.

But the value of Ilchenko's tale lies not only in this: the poet is not portrayed in isolation but in the midst of contemporary writers, poets, and artists who had respect and affection for the unusual, consistent nature of the poet of the Ukrainian people. Among the figures met with in the story are Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, the critics, and the writers Turgenev and Leo Tolstoy, in his young days.

Fine literary language and a masterly portrayal of Petersburg and its surroundings are big assets of the book.

A BOOK ABOUT MARINERS

Boris Vadetsky. *Your Path Lay on the Sea's Highways*. Navy Publishing House. Moscow-Leningrad. 150 pages.

The book is about Fyodor Fyodorovich Matushkin, college friend of Pushkin, famous Russian traveller and subsequent admiral.

The title is taken from Pushkin's poem *October 19th*, which has a few lines addressed directly to his college friend. They say that Matushkin stepped just straight from the school onto a ship and from then on his path lay on the high seas.

The story begins with college years, when Alexander Pushkin and Fyodor Matushkin talk of the future in the quiet of the school gardens. The poet dreams of future laurel while his friend yearns for the sea, for him the symbol of beauty and poesy.

The plain-faced muscular youth became transformed whenever he spoke of the sea or read of ships or journeys round the world.

Fyodor Matushkin had hardly completed college when he received a letter of recommendation to V. M. Golovin, the well-known Russian navigator, and with him made his circumnavigation of the globe.

Later Matushkin took part in the expedition of Wrangel, the renowned traveller (1820—1829). Later still he fought aboard ship in the Crimea during the Turkish War and commanded a naval unit at Sweaborg.

The story is written in brisk style and makes attractive reading.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A RUSSIAN WOMAN BARD

Maremiana Golubkova. *Two Lives in Half a Century*. Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow. 329 pages.

Reminiscences of our contemporaries have been embellished by yet another interesting and original book, the autobiography of Maremiana Golubkova, the renowned narrator of stories from Pechora.

The book had been prepared for the press by N. Leontyev, writer and folklore expert and himself the discoverer of Golubkova.

Golubkova is fifty. In that half a century she has lived two lives: *The Bitter Age* (as the first part of the book is called) tells of the life of a downtrodden woman, who grew up in the backwoods of the former tsarist empire while the second part describes life after the

October Revolution which brought her independence and recognition of her poetic gifts.

Golubkova's talent for verse was first manifested orally (she learned to read and write only as an adult, after the Revolution) in the words accompanying the weeping and declamations of the people surrounding the coffin of a near kinsman or at some other grievous event. Such mourning often takes the form of improvisation and reaches a high poetic level.

In his preface to the book Leontyev writes: "I found Golubkova, a plain, modest fisherwoman living in a village on Pechora far from the beaten track. She was known only as a very good mourner. In her mourning she could give vivid expression to any event in her life."

Later on Golubkova shone in another form of folk art... that of minstrelsy. Keeping to the canons of the old Russian art of story telling with its epic character, Golubkova brought to it a new content. She composed many stories about her River Pechora, about collectivization, Lenin and Stalin and the Red Army.

Leontyev's popularization of her work brought Golubkova general recognition. She was invited to Archangel and then to Moscow where she took part in the congress of folklore performers, recited her stories at the Writers' Association, in the editorial offices of the Moscow newspapers and in university lecture halls... The years of the Great Patriotic War were the most fruitful for Golubkova. It was during the war years that she composed her story *Two Lives in Half a Century*.

Maremiāna was born in a fishing village in a region bordering on the tundra. She had never known her father and when she was six her mother sent her out to service. She was nurse to a family of rich peasants and also did all sorts of menial work. She was half starved and cruelly beaten for the slightest fault.

She gave vent to her feelings in her songs. Maremiāna relates how at that time little farm slaves "composed their songs while toiling." "At twelve I remember how as soon as I snatched a quiet moment or when toil didn't stop the mind working, thoughts would bubble up like yeast!... Thoughts... and the tears would follow... no need to force them, they rolled down of themselves... and words floated down on the tears, floated like ice... on the flood waters of spring."

Golubkova's story is taken down from her own words and retains the peculiarities of lively, picturesque and popular language now and then changing to the bard's song, the proverb and the saying. Sometimes a poem or song is inserted as an illustration and this lends the book a special charm. The first part of the book contains an interesting description of bygone days in Pechora—the rigid unchanging life, local traditions and customs, the northern landscape and working conditions.

The subject of forced marriage recurs again and again in the work of writers and in oral folklore. In Maremiāna's book the story

of her first marriage with a man she hated is told with powerful effect. The marriage was, of course, unhappy. Maremiāna left her husband, gained her separation in the courts, a bold thing for a woman to do in those days. Her character is obvious in this story—a girl of outstanding ability, will power, industry and vitality.

Upon leaving her husband Maremiāna earned her livelihood as a farm labourer.

The first part of the book ends with the fall of tsarism in February 1917. The date coincided with Maremiāna's second marriage, this time by choice, to a man clever and capable, many years her senior but devoted to her.

In the second part entitled *At the Crossroads* Golubkova describes her family life, the birth and upbringing of her children (had they all lived there would be seventeen of them) and of the profound changes in the outside world which had their repercussions in remote Pechora: of the Civil War, the establishment of Soviet rule and the beginning of collectivization. Maremiāna regarded collectivization as the final settling of accounts with the "bitter age". After the death of her husband she joined the collective farm where she soon showed herself an able and devoted member.

Part three, *The New Road*, describes her entry into an adult school where she learned to read and write and induced most of the village women to follow her example. She sent her children to school as well. "The children helped me to go ahead, I learned with them." She writes with pride of the feeling of camaraderie between her and her sons who subsequently became college students, teachers and Red Army officers.

The fourth part of the book entitled *The People's War* concerns the years 1941 to 1945. Her grief for sons killed in action did not stop her from working. As she writes: "I wanted to fight against the fascist viper first with my hands, then with my sons—my sons have gone, but I am keeping on... I wanted to fight if not with my sons then with my deeds... and on second thoughts—no, I said, perhaps not with my deeds then with my words but anyway I'll not back out of the war against Hitler."

Ending her book (it was written before Victory Day) Golubkova wrote that her aim was to rouse the people to great deeds. She had another aim as well—to leave "a deep impress" of the people of our times.

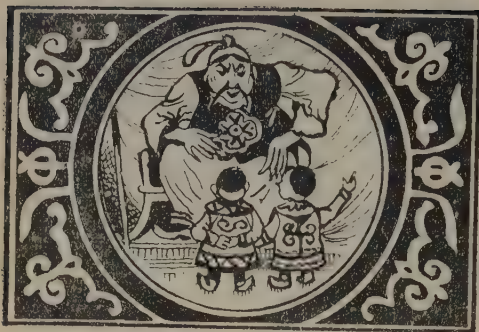
Golubkova's recollections make just such a "deep impress", the striking self-portrait of a talented Soviet woman, a woman of the people.

AMUR TALES

Dmitri Nagishkin. *Young Chokcho*. Far Eastern State Publishing House. Khabarovsk. 52 pages.

Dmitri Nagishkin has already published several books about the Far East. There is *Peaceful Bay*, for instance, an adventure story for youth.

Not long ago he published a collection of tales for children under the general heading of the initial story *Young Chokcho*.



An illustration for *YOUNG CHOKCHO*

There are thirteen tales in this collection in which the heroes are children of the Nanai and Udeghei (peoples of the Far East) and animals.

In most of the stories the good children get the better of wicked people, but it's a hard won victory. They have to combat nature at her rawest and overcome the dangers of the hunt. Traditional fairy-tale themes are met in the stories but they've been given a bold and original twist. In the story *Maila*, for example, which is about an orphan and a wicked stepmother (the theme of *Cinderella*), Maila honours the memory of her beloved father and does all she can to placate the stepmother. But the latter is never satisfied, always demanding more and more of the girl. Maila is a brave girl and slays the fearsome "amba", the tiger. In all she does she is helped by plants and by toys made by her deceased father. The story ends with the stepmother changing into an owl while Maila ascends a moonbeam to the moon itself. Just before dawn every day she descends to earth and if she sees "any of the children sleeping with tears on their eyes she wipes them away and invokes pleasant dreams. You can see her if you open your eyes suddenly at night and find the moonbeams shining into them."

The idea of a child being helped by animals, plants and inanimate things is repeated in *Young Chokcho*, who sets out on a long and dangerous journey to avenge the murder of his father.

Some of the tales about animals follow Kipling's method. Among these are *How the Bear and the Striped Squirrel Fell Out*, explaining the origin of the five spots on the back of the squirrel and *The Bear As Reindeer Keeper*.

Dmitri Nagishkin's tales are written with poetic feeling, simply and clearly, their moral is not intrusive and is easily grasped by the child. The book is illustrated with Nanai and Udeghei subjects by the author himself.

NOTES OF AN AIRMAN

Colonel Alexander Shtepenko. *On a Long-Range Bomber*. Military Publishing House. Moscow. 144 pages.

Before the war the author was an Arctic aircraft navigator employed on the Northern

Sea Route. The war found him in the Arctic. Polar flyers have always occupied a special place among Soviet aviators—long before the war they had attained glory by their heroic exploits. Our Arctic airmen are men of a special breed, trained to endurance and courage, used to long flights under the most trying conditions. And during the war they carried through the toughest and most vital missions.

Alexander Shtepenko was navigator on the plane piloted by Hero of the Soviet Union Mikhail Vodopyanov, who played a prominent part in the rescue of the ice-wrecked passengers and crew of the "Chelyuskin". The airmen who had just returned to camp from a long cruise over the ice wastes of the Kara Sea, when news came through of the German invasion, immediately flew to Moscow to take part in active service.

In Moscow they switched over to a heavy bomber and soon began long-range bombing operations. It is these intrepid night flights that Alexander Shtepenko, now Hero of the Soviet Union, describes in his book.

A BOOK ABOUT A RUSSIAN PLAYWRIGHT

Dmitri Blagoy. *D. I. Fonvisin*. State Literary Publishing House. Moscow. 112 pages.

This book is about Denis Fonvisin, the prominent Russian playwright of the 18th century, the author of the two excellent comedies *The Brigadier* and *The Country Squire*.

According to Maxim Gorky, Fonvisin's chief service to Russian literature is that he initiated in it "the denunciatory-realistic trend, the most magnificent and, possibly, most socially fruitful of all."

In *The Brigadier* Fonvisin ridiculed the imitation of all that was French, running to absurd lengths in the 18th century; in *The Country Squire* he criticized the cardinal evil of the day—serfdom. Fonvisin's desire to get his materials straight from life and his manner of listening to the living language of the people gave him the capacity to write genuine realistic comedy in an age dominated by French classicism.

D. Blagoy gives an all-round portrayal of the writer against the background of the vivid and interesting period of Catherine. He describes the evolution of the writer's work, both its form and content, and shows how his comedies paved the way for the subsequent development of the realistic trend in Russian drama in the works of Griboyedov, Gogol, Saltykov-Shchedrin and others.

The book is well written and makes interesting reading; despite its slimness the book recreates a living and historically true image of the 18th-century writer, his epoch and the literary environment in which he lived and worked.

NEW TRANSLATIONS OF A POLISH POET

Juliusz Slowacki. *Selected Works*. State Literary Publishing House. Moscow. 240 pages.

The latest booklet in the series *The Slav*

Library is devoted to Juliusz Slowacki, who together with A. Mickiewicz can claim to be outstanding Polish romantic poets of the 19th century.

Juliusz Slowacki, who profoundly felt the humiliation of his country, took part in the fight for liberation against tsarist Russia in 1830. When the uprising was crushed he went abroad and spent his life far from his beloved land. Juliusz Slowacki did not lose faith in his countrymen—"the nation in chains, my kindred people in exile". He believed in the vital strength of his people and would tolerate no suggestion that they were doomed:

"Work, wait, have faith," he said. "Your people will not taste death, the earth is for the dead, but the free spirit knows no tomb."

Even his purely love lyrics are tinged with homesickness and hope for his country's liberation. A lofty patriotic note is struck by these verses composed during the insurrection of 1830.

Slowacki is a Polish classic worthy of a place among the world's best poets. He mastered the art of verse to perfection. Melodious and fluid, his compositions captivate by their inspired fantasy and profound feeling.

Selected Works includes specimens of Juliusz Slowacki's excellent lyrics, the poems *Jan Lelecki* and *In Switzerland*, and the drama *Willa Weneda*, a symbolic portrayal of the tragic struggle of the Polish people. These are in the latest translations by A. Kovalevsky.

For the Soviet reader this booklet marks the

beginning of a closer acquaintance with the works of Juliusz Slowacki.

A SELECTION FROM CALDWELL

Erskine Caldwell. *Georgia Boy*. State Literary Publishing House. Moscow. 127 pages.

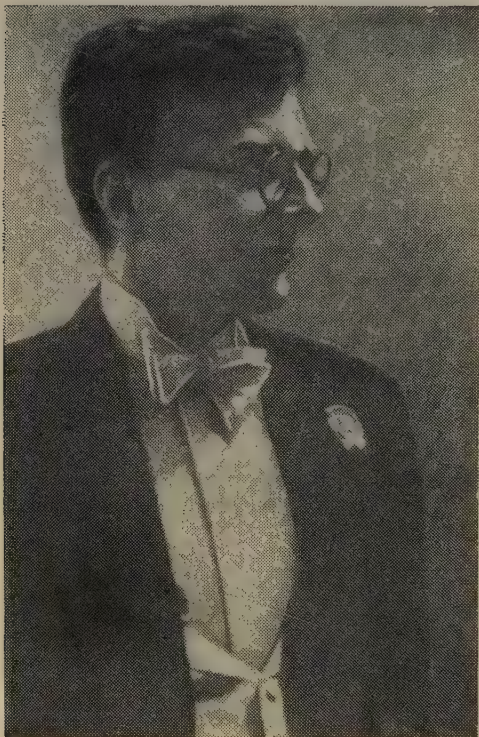
Erskine Caldwell, the talented American writer, is well known to Soviet readers. Many of his stories have been published in magazines or in separate editions. His largest works (*Tobacco Road*, *It Happened in July*) are also known to Soviet readers. Caldwell's sombre, often caustic, humour in describing the provincial life of the South—workers and sharecroppers, wealthy landowners, Negroes and the poor whites—the social aim of his work, his laconic style and his realism have earned him merited success with the Soviet critic and public.

Not long ago a selection of Caldwell's stories taken from his series *My Old Man*, was published in Moscow. These stories have been excellently translated by Natalia Volzhina and Ivan Kashkin. It is a tastefully arranged little book. Vera Smirnova who contributed the preface notes the author's keen powers of observation, his realism and his vivid portrayal of the heroes—plain folk all. Concerning the original structure of the stories, which in a way are chapters in one big "story about the disintegration of the family", V. Smirnova has this to say: outwardly the plot is the perfect anecdote, but behind the laughter is the soul-searing, high pressure psychological drama with the inevitable unhappy ending.



Cover for *GEORGIA BOY*

THE NINTH SYMPHONY AND ITS PLACE AMONG THE WORKS OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH



The appeal of Dmitri Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony undoubtedly lies in the profound, ethical strength of its conception, its faultless structure and lastly, in the sheer beauty of the music.

Nowhere has Shostakovich embodied his ideas with such perfection or such striking brevity of expression as in his Ninth Symphony. Although in five movements, this symphony lasts but a little over twenty minutes—a phenomenon well-nigh unique not only for Shostakovich himself, but in contemporary symphonism in general.

The Ninth is no miniature composition, but a work characterized by an aphoristic style both in its separate movements (preeminently, the fourth, which occupies only one page of the score) and in the composition as a whole. And yet there is nothing left unsaid, nothing incomplete, nothing that is merely suggested. Quite the opposite!—Through these laconic and aphoristic forms, the composer has succeeded in expressing a content that is comprehensive, rich in thought and consummate in idea; all of which entitles the Ninth Symphony to a place among Shostakovich's

"war-symphonies" alongside a work of such stirring power as his Pianoforte Trio.

Beginning with the Fifth Symphony, the central theme in the works of Shostakovich has been the destiny of man. This is one of the "eternal themes" in all art—the theme of the par excellence of the romanticists and usually treated by them in its tragical aspect. And Shostakovich, occupied with this same theme, rightly chooses the tragic approach. But there is a marked difference between Shostakovich's treatment and that of the romanticists.

With them the tragedy of man's destiny was predetermined by an impassable gulf between the individual and the world around him. For the romantic school of art the source of disaster lay in the loneliness of the personality, whether harmonious or rent by conflicting emotions, whether an ego apart from the common run of men or one rebelling a multitude of its fellows and doomed in consequence to similar tragedy. The loneliness the romanticists regarded as surmountable and the hero saw himself confronted with a fatal dilemma: either death or utter isolation in a world of dream.

With Shostakovich the picture is reversed. Man is inseparably a part of the universe. The dangers that threaten him are the same as menace all mankind. The only way to escape loneliness is to merge one's ego completely with the realities.

Such is the summing up of the Fifth Symphony which opens with a Faustus-like and grim question regarding the meaning of life. The music in the First Movement passes through the struggle of the personality against the doubts that beset it and on into the tragedy of loneliness, reaching cosmic dimensions in the Largo. The triumphant jubilation of the last section of the Finale is not reconciliation but a merging with the life of the world, a conclusion dictated by profound faith in the final triumph of reason. For nothing has the Finale of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony often been compared with the Finale of Beethoven's *Eroica*.

In the Sixth Symphony, too, we find in the main, the same idea, differently interpreted, perhaps, but intrinsically the same. Once again and for the last time man contemplates the drama that has raged in his soul, and then he turns to life, to its glamour and joy. This explains what seems at first glance a paradox, namely, the union of the first movement, slow and tragic, with the other two, so impetuous and full of riotous mirth in the finale which almost borders on buffoonery.

In both symphonies the beginnings of the conflict may seem to be of the romantic mood, but its solution is contrary to that reached by the romanticists. The composer asserts not the rupture between man and the world, but the surmounting of obstacles—a return from the old romantic contentions to the classical unity of the individual and the universe: no pessimism this, but an optimistic faith in life and humanity.

From this direct road leads to the composer's cycle of "war" symphonies. His Seventh, the Leningrad Symphony, embodies the dual conception. It completes the first triptych, and evolves the new personality. The romantic has developed into the citizen. The hero of the Seventh Symphony is at one and the same time the strong individual and the whole people and a symbol of victory. This growth is portrayed in the dramatic evolution of the composition. The initial theme, the musical portrait, as it were, of the hero, passes in the second part of the first movement into the theme of a great requiem, and further—in the Finale, it assumes the dazzling image of Victory.

The symphonic cycle dedicated to the war opens with the Leningrad Symphony. The theme of the destiny of man has expanded to the far broader one of the destinies of humanity plunged into the cataclysm of an unprecedented war.

It should particularly be noted that in the Fifth and Sixth symphonies as well as in the Pianoforte Quintet, man's oneness with life is presented as yet in the abstract; this is a metaphysical aspect of the problem, ringing out the ties linking Shostakovich with the classical contrapuntists of the 18th century, preeminently with Bach. But in the Seventh Symphony it is the personality, thinking and feeling amid the environment of social and historical realities, that has become the central figure in the music of Shostakovich.

In this way Shostakovich, in his progress towards classicism, has arrived at a method typical of Russian musical art since the time of Glinka. And in this national and historical definiteness of conflicts and personalities lies the strength of the tragic conflicts portrayed in the music of Glinka, Borodin and Mussorgsky.

Through the Seventh and Eighth symphonies run a great compassion for the sufferings of man and flaming, denunciatory wrath against the powers of evil and enslavement. Ringing high above all this is the supreme idea that faith in the final triumph of good over evil will prevail over grief and agony, however terrible these may be. In the Seventh Symphony this confidence is affirmed in the concluding triumphant image. In the Eighth Symphony the path lies through profound contemplation in the first movement, through a grim military march in the second, a grue-some "toccata of death" in the third, a picture of boundless grief in the fourth; finally, the Pastorale comes as a symbol of eternal spring, beauty and youth, vanquishing death. The Pastorale is the culminating point of the Eighth Symphony—its consummation. It is the failure to grasp this con-

ception that has given rise to the erroneous interpretation of the Eighth Symphony as one of pessimism. The rays of light illuminating its last section impart to this tragedy an optimism as strong as the optimism of the great tragedies of the Renaissance, including many of the tragedies of Shakespeare.

In none of Shostakovich's earlier works is the contrast of conflicting forces expressed more vividly than in his Seventh and Eighth symphonies. This is, however, no romantic discord within the personality, no contradiction between man and the universe; it is a schism rending the world itself. Confronting each other in the exposition, in the middle part of the first movement of the Seventh Symphony, and in the third movement and Finale of the Eighth, are two contrasting worlds of good and of evil, freedom and enslavement, humanism and hatred. We have this same juxtaposition in the Pastorale: in the terrific onrush of the fugue and the recurrence, inexorable as fate itself, of the symphony's transformed principal theme. It sounds like a warning, an insistent reminder of a horror that should never be repeated.

Such a reminder is surely not to be interpreted as pessimism. No serious artist of our times can forget that, even with the destruction of the evil power that plunged the world into the recent disaster, not every menace jeopardizing the happiness of humanity has been averted.

In the group of major compositions dedicated to the war which Shostakovich produced between the years 1941 and 1945, there is a certain kinship and continuity of philosophic conception both in the structures of the images and in the recurring intonations.

The rhythm, inexorable as the working of a steel mechanism, in the middle episode of the first movement of the Seventh Symphony, and in the third movement of the Eighth—is a common feature that can hardly be put down either to accident or to any peculiar characteristic of Shostakovich's style. Neither is the resemblance accidental between the bassoon and the English Horn solos in analogous places in the first movement of the Seventh and the Eighth symphonies. Still more striking is it that the reflective melody following the initial eight-bar passage in the first movement of the Eighth Symphony should be an exact reproduction of the theme we have already mentioned in the middle episode of the Seventh Symphony's opening movement.

The latter theme has earned for itself the sobriquet of "German". An intuitive definition of this kind is perhaps naive from the scientific point of view, but it is essentially correct. The theme is indeed a musical symbol of the evil power of destruction. We find confirmation of this both in the programme of the symphony written by the composer himself and in the pronouncements of critics, to say nothing of the dramatic role fitted by the middle episode itself. The latter breaks in—a sharp contrast—on the courageously optimistic, emotionally translucent exposition of the first movement, to be again contrasted with

the tragically mournful requiem and the bassoon solo shortly following it.

How then, does this melody occur in the first movement of the Eighth Symphony? The exposition of the first movement voices the profound reflections of the musician and humanist on the terrible calamity that has overtaken our planet. Can we possibly believe that, quite negligently, Shostakovich took as his leading image in this new symphony a theme he had just used as a symbol of the destructive element?

We must remember, however, that the symphony opens with a question that leads further and further into the sphere of reflection. The riddle resolves itself into an exquisitely delicate device of musical drama. The opening of the "reflections" mirrored in the leading part is an answer to the query of the preceding eight-bar passage. What is this question? What depths does it seek to fathom, if not those revealed in the first movement of the Seventh Symphony, forming its fundamental theme, not only in the musical sense but along wider issues—questions of war and the grief brought upon mankind by its foes?

In the Seventh Symphony the "German theme" is mechanical—soulless, dead. In the Eighth, the same melody is tuneful and has all the inexpressible sadness of a memory. The dramatical conception is clear. That which was presented in the Seventh Symphony as an object of direct reflection (from that arises the grimness of the musical image created by the author) has in the Eighth become the starting point of thoughts and reflections on the cataclysm of war.

The Ninth Symphony is intrinsically bound with the group of Shostakovich's works dedicated to war themes. The similarity of the emotional content of the exposition to that of the middle episode in the first movement of the Seventh Symphony is in a certain measure analogous to the relation between the first two movements and the two last of the Trio. There is something of the same kind, too, in the conflicting juxtaposition of the first three movements and the last two of the Ninth Symphony. This is, of course, conventional. In music there can be no explicit verbal definition. The juxtaposition might be expressed in the formula of a serene dream of a beautiful life amidst a reality that is far from serene.

Would a formula of this kind embody the insoluble conflict that was one of the principles of the romantic world outlook? By no means. To a romantic, the tragedy is inherent in the world in which he lives. It is an incurable malady of the ego and of life as such. And the dream of the romantic, therefore, is a dream of the unattainable.

To Shostakovich the conflict is one imposed by an external evil force. It is a surmountable evil. But still it exists and breeds tragedy on a world scale. It is the dissension within the world that is the source of Shostakovich's tragical conceptions. In his music we find an answer to the question of the legitimacy of the tragic genre in Soviet art. In Soviet life private dramas are possible, but tragedy as an inevitable and fatal conflict between

man and destiny or man and society is thing precluded by the very nature of the Soviet mode of life. But for the world as a whole, the era of tragedies is not a thing of the past. Evil is an ever-present menace to the freedom, happiness and life itself of hundreds of millions of men and women. And the Soviet artist cannot stand aloof indifferent to the historical and individual destinies of these millions, especially in our epoch of terrible unrest. His weapon in the struggle against evil is the tragedy, a weapon no less potent than satire or the pamphlet.

The Allegro which opens the Ninth Symphony is in the classical clear-cut sonata form, permeated with a radiant spirit from the first bar to the last. The very first then brings sunshine into the picture. The Haydn style of symphonism is not an outcome of ties only intonational and formally associative. Of far greater moment is the spirit of the music, translucent, emphatically melodious with a resilient rhythm, bright and joyous and yet not devoid of a forceful vibration.

What we have here is not the ironic pseudo-classical conventionalization we find, say, in Prokofyev's *Classical Symphony*. The composer's thought is obviously not fixed on the distant past. Aiming as he does to create an atmosphere of classical transparency and a placid vision of the world, he naturally turns to the expressive device not of the romantic epoch but to those of classical symphonism. In this same way in portraying his tragic pictures, he has frequently, over the heads of the romanticists, turned to the epoch of Vivaldi and Bach.

The modernity of the Allegro is stressed in its second theme. I would not go so far as to ascribe autobiographical elements to it, but there are certainly reminiscences of Shostakovich's early art. One has memory of his youthful mischievous scherzos with their deliberate stressing of the catchy line of popular street music. Such is the structure—as unlike Haydn as it can well be—of the second theme of the Allegro with its heavy fortissimo arpeggios in the bass and the unexpected pianissimos—a theme jaunty and lilting as a song played on piccolo.

If in his early scherzos and in the buffo marches, galops and polkas for which he showed a preference, the riotous mirth of masked the grin of mockery, turning to parody and grotesque, and if these gracings still echo in the scherzo of the Fifth Symphony (the waltz-like solo of four French horns in the Trio), and in the clownish mirth of the Coda in the finale of the Sixth Symphony—now in the Ninth, this exuberance has mellowed. The second theme of the Allegro while it vividly contrasts in style with the first, is maintained on the same emotional plane as the latter. And it is on the juxtaposition of a radiant, undimmed sensation of life as a whole with a joyous vision of one's own youth that the composer bases the contrast between the two themes.

The second movement, *Moderato*, is particularly restful. The melody, peculiarly Shostakovichian, is a simple, unadorned

kovich's own, is tenderly, intimately tuneful, seeming to lead to infinity. There is a remarkable rhythmical pattern with sudden pauses, resembling sighs. In the middle part of the Moderato the wary measured chromatic passages in the strings, despite the intensive crescendos, have a caressingly soothing swing. The second movement, though it is expressed in a variety of ways and glides into different spheres of lyrical emotions, embodies the same radiant sensations as does the Allegro.

The reminiscent mood in the second theme of the Allegro is no casual occurrence. It permeates even more intensively the Moderato of the Ninth Symphony. The two principal musical images of Moderato are a reflection of some of the composer's earlier creations. This is the portrayal of a soul in all its chastity; an artist's lyrical contemplation of his own ego as he gazes at past visions.

They glide along in the initial melody, marking back now to the old trite love-songs of the streets, now to Shostakovich's own music of more recent origin. They are not to be mistaken either in the well-known song of Katherine in Scene III of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. The two melodies exist side by side within an almost identical rhythmical and intonational pattern.

But in the Moderato of the Ninth Symphony the melody is no longer so obviously an offspring of the old crudely sentimental popular love-song. That is understandable—it is a result of the difference of theme; in the opera, the dream of a provincial Lady Macbeth, in the symphony, an all-embracing conception of humanity.

The Moderato has the appeal of beauty that is physically tangible. Not so long ago critics, while paying Shostakovich's music a well-merited tribute for its talent, brilliance, wit and rare perfection of technique, yet denied its beauty. The causes underlying that opinion were many and not entirely based on erroneous judgement. If on the one hand we had not yet grown familiar to the novelty of Shostakovich's music; if its aestheticism, its peculiar regularities and

"harmony" often did escape the perceptions of even an unprejudiced listener, impeding the sensation of beauty; we know, on the other hand, that in those years the very art of Shostakovich was still in process of formation.

The rebellion against the canons of romantic ethics and esthetics, so characteristic of certain new trends in modern world music, manifested itself most violently in the works of the young Shostakovich, and often led him to ethical and esthetical nihilism.

Without multiplying examples, we will confine ourselves with a reference to *The Nose*, his first opera. In this work the ironical attitude not only towards the canons of romantic opera, but to all romanticism in art generally, had become a goal in itself. And to this negation Shostakovich juxtaposed no new positive principles.

It would be incorrect to call *The Nose* a mere harmless musical anecdote or a futile experiment in form. It was something far more serious. *The Nose* was a detailed and well-defined declaration. It not only negated generally accepted ideals, but questioned the very meaning of existence. That is why the device became a mocking grotesque, offering no new beauty in place of the "old beauty" that had been exiled from opera. Ethical nihilism had given birth to esthetical nihilism.

The Nose was a product of the morbid state of world art in the twenties, and a time of crisis in the personal world-outlook of the youthful Shostakovich himself. We have only to trace Shostakovich's progress from the sarcastic grotesque of *The Nose* through the study of pathological sufferings in *Lady Macbeth* to the optimistic tragedy of the transformed personality in the Fifth Symphony, then to the Pianoforte Quintet, and finally to the social tragedy of humanity in the Seventh and Eighth symphonies and the Pianoforte Trio, to see that as his positive attitude to the world matured and broader conceptions evolved, there arose a new and lofty beauty in his art.

Accustomed as we are in a certain degree



Dmitri Shostakovich with his son

to the character of his art, the element of beauty in it even today is not sensed easily or spontaneously by everyone, not even by every professional musician. But beauty occurs in all the works of the "later Shostakovich". There is beauty in the Ninth Symphony, particularly in the Moderato. And the beauty of the music is not a caressing external entity—it is the invariable beauty of Shostakovich—the expression of profound thought and chaste feeling.

Contrasting with the Moderato is the Third, Presto Movement. And here we are reminded of the Sixth Symphony, this time of its middle movement. But in the Sixth, the principal theme was entrusted to the shrill, eccentric piccolo clarinet, while here the leading part belongs to the mellow big clarinet. This is important as showing how the character of grotesqueness in the Scherzo has ultimately toned down.

The central episode of the Scherzo is a lilting rhythm. And this episode, I think, can be regarded as the turning point in the structural development of the composer's dramatic composition. In the defiant insistence of the trumpet solo, there is something agitated, ominous, reminiscent of the sinister trumpet solo in the third movement of the Eighth Symphony. It is the precursor of the tragedy to be unfolded in the fourth movement.

This interpretation is confirmed by the reprise of the Scherzo where the sonority fades away, the movement ceases and the scherzo merges without a pause into the gloomily pathetic Largo.

An almost sudden change of colouring! How like the Pianoforte Trio, where a similar eruption of the funeral chords of the chaconne after the joyful surge of the scherzo produces an impression of fearful contrast! It seems as if a flowered curtain had suddenly fallen revealing to the awe-stricken spectator a world of grief and death.

In the Largo, trombones and trumpet enunciate a stirring, questioning phrase. Then follows a tensely-dramatic bassoon recitative and next a clamour from the brass instruments and another recitative, dying down against a background of choral string sonorities. The Largo sounds like a passionate appeal to men and women. In the midst of merriment and joy forget not what has been! Remember what may still be in store for you!

And lastly the Finale. Regarding the emotional nature of the Finale and hence an appropriate definition of its genre and that of the symphony as a whole, opinions are widely divergent. There have been attempts, it is true, to interpret the Finale and the entire Ninth Symphony as a peculiar kind of musical comedy. However, the mere presence in a composition of devices usual in comedy is not always sufficient ground for labelling the work as comedy. There may be instances when devices of this kind are used as a disguise—thereby stressing the drama of a situation. Convincing proof of this is the art of Charles Chaplin.

There is no need to pursue the parallel between Chaplin and Shostakovich. The two

men are artists of totally different outlook and correspondingly different manners and styles. In Chaplin we see the bitter hopelessness of a small man crushed by the Moloch of modern life. In Shostakovich there is the profound agitation of a mind which knows that the struggle of man against the powers of evil is not at an end; that the spectre of the recent catastrophe continues to threaten the happiness of the people that the time has not yet come for care-free placidity. In Chaplin it is the loneliness that walks in the night; in Shostakovich a caustic pamphlet exposing the smugness of idealists who imagine that the time of perfect appeasement has arrived.

The pamphlet style is perhaps the most suitable definition we can find for the genre of the Ninth Symphony. This interpretation will explain, moreover, the aphoristic conciseness of its form and the intonational and constructional ties binding the music of the Ninth Symphony with the cycle of Shostakovich's "war" symphonies and his Pianoforte Trio. All these works are permeated by one and the same idea differently expressed. In the Finale following the Chaconne of the Trio a picture of death is unfolded. The grim rhythm of the Jewish dance-tune brings before the mind's eye ghastly vision of Maidanek and Treblinka, of German inquisitors making their victims dance around the graves prepared to receive them.

In the Symphony the Largo merges without any interval straight into the Finale. Its principal theme might appear a gay and lighthearted one. Interwoven in the classic lightness of the form is buffoonery, almost verging on operetta. What then, we ask ourselves, is it that fetters the movement of the music? Surely it ought to develop into a very whirlwind of impetuous sound. But no; right until the Coda it remains measured, almost to the point of automatism. In its dynamic development the quasi "lighthearted" first theme, reaching its culmination in a mighty brass ensemble, produces as the effect of frenzied demoniac laughter. At the second theme, in the Finale, in the *Allegretto*, is gloomily raucous with its persistent accentuation and obdurate repetitions of the same notes, strongly resembling the Finale of the Pianoforte Trio. And what following on the culminating passages, there such an agglomeration of harsh harmonies? Why is the Coda of the Finale hurriedly elusive, the music not terminating but vanishing into space? And another characteristic detail: the "lighthearted" first theme of the Finale is opened by the *sarabasso* which gave the recitative in the Largo. How like an actor who during a performance has passed from tragedy into grotesque. But this grotesque bears only outward and formal resemblance to the grotesque in the composer's early music. The bitter irony was detached and groundless, it aimed at nothing and was not the outcome of any firm ethical outlook. Here the grotesque is the expression of a lofty idea.

Can the Ninth Symphony be treated in the light of a scherzo? If we take the term to mean a form of comedy in music, no. E

if we regard the "war" symphonies of Shostakovich as one symphonic "super cycle", with the Seventh Symphony as the Allegro and the Eighth as a grand Largo, then to the Ninth may be assigned the role of Scherzo. In this aspect its several elements of comedy, the aphoristic quality and the tone of the "pamphlet", will be justified. The hypothesis

would thus be confirmed that the symphonic tetralogy of the war begun by Shostakovich in 1941 is not yet completed and that we may expect another symphony contributing the Finale—the concluding chord of the great conception.

DAVID RABINOVICH

THE ART OF THE PUPPET THEATRE

Twenty-five years ago when Sergei Obraztsov, son of the renowned Soviet scientist, Academician Obraztsov, first began to appear before the public with his puppets,¹ many people were deeply shocked: "Just imagine!" they said. "The son of a member of the Academy, an actor of the Musical Studio of the Art Theatre, a graduate of Moscow University and the Art Institute—and he can find nothing better to do than to play with dolls! What a profession!!"

Today Sergei Obraztsov is a Merited Artist of the R.S.F.S.R.

But even at the dawn of Obraztsov's career all who saw the young actor, including his father who always displayed keen interest in his son's "peculiar profession", could not but agree that he possessed remarkable talent. Nowadays anybody who ventured to "commiserate" with Obraztsov for his choice of career would be regarded with amazement. Sergei Obraztsov is one of the most popular actors and producers in the Soviet Union and his fame extends far beyond its borders; he is the acknowledged leader of a large host of "puppet players", representatives of an important and independent genre in the Soviet theatre.

Obraztsov is the founder and art director of the Moscow Central Puppet Theatre, central not only by right of title and location but truly central in its authority and influence on other theatres of this genre. Fifteen years ago, when the young director organized his theatre, the entire cast, including the administration and technical personnel, numbered six persons. Its entire equipment was housed in one small basement.

At present, the theatre has its own premises in one of Moscow's main thoroughfares, with an audience hall seating 400, a specially equipped stage and all the necessary studios and auxiliary workshops. The basic principle on which the work of this theatre is founded is the manipulation of puppets appearing above screens of various constructions (round, rotating, many-tiered, and so forth)—the actors operating with the puppets from behind the screen and speaking the role. The puppets used are chiefly of the Bibabot design, but sometimes marionettes, dolls with jointed limbs and so forth, are used. The personnel of the theatre includes the actors Voskoboinikova, Kazmina, Kamenskaya, Ot-



Sergei Obraztsov with the doll "Big Ivan"

ten, Potemkina, Sinelnikova, Uspenskaya Maizel, Melissarato, Samodur, Speransky; artists Terekhova and Tulikov, and the composers Alexandrova, Kochetkov and Teplitsky.

The theatre is justly proud of its museum which contains one of the world's richest collections of puppets used by various nations throughout the ages. Here, the ancient Ukrainian "whirling doll" stands near the Javanese puppets on Vajangpur rods, the English Punch winks at the Italian Burattino, the huge Tibetan mask seems diminutive alongside the gigantic Bengal puppet Gfull-life size) which comes from Hindustan.

In these 15 years the cast and other personnel of the theatre has increased by more than 60 times and its budget more than 300 times. The staff includes over 200 artists of various specialities. The annual budget exceeds two million rubles.

The theatre gives two or three matinee performances for children daily and a performance for adults every evening. Additional performances are given in schools and clubs. The box office is always sold out and you will never find an empty seat in the theatre.

Apart from the regular performance, the theatre premises hum like a beehive with

¹ Obraztsov sings, standing behind a screen, accompanying the words of the song by the mimicry of two puppets, moved by his hands, according to the Bibabot principle.

various activities—rehearsals, discussions, research, etc. The Courses for Producers and Art Directors of Puppet Theatres of the U.S.S.R. function here, a miniature university, training highly-qualified specialists. Here you will find representatives of different nationalities—Russians and Ukrainians, Georgians and Armenians, Buryats and others, including one Negro.

Before the October Revolution, there was no permanent puppet theatre anywhere in the vast Russian empire although this medium of entertainment had been popular with the people for centuries. Mention is made of a Russian puppet show in the travel notes of Adam Oleari, secretary of the Holstein Embassy in 1633, who saw travelling show-men with their puppets at a public holiday. The popular hero was "Petrushka", a long-nosed, hunchbacked, ugly but merry, cunning jester, akin to the English Punch, the French Polichinelle, the Czech Gachparek, the Polish Kopenjak, the German Hanswurst. . . In short, satiric scenes presented in improvised versions on the public squares, Petrushka quarrelled with the police, the merchants, the government officials, chattered on family topics. His patter, uttered in a squeaking voice, was rich in popular sayings, telling puns.

The tsarist government and censorship ruthlessly persecuted Petrushka. It was nothing for him to be mercilessly burned, drowned, have his arms broken, to be whipped, popped into a bag and banged on a stone, sawn and hacked about—the tsarist police strove in every way to wipe out the very genre of these satirical "dangerous" performances in Russia. But, as in his little plays Petrushka always emerged triumphant from all misfortunes, so in real life nothing could stop these performances. Of course under such conditions the popular puppet theatre could only be of a very primitive nature throughout the centuries, the show-men being itinerant beggars who wandered from town to town with their barrel-organ and screens, performing at fairs. Amongst these players were men of rare ability.

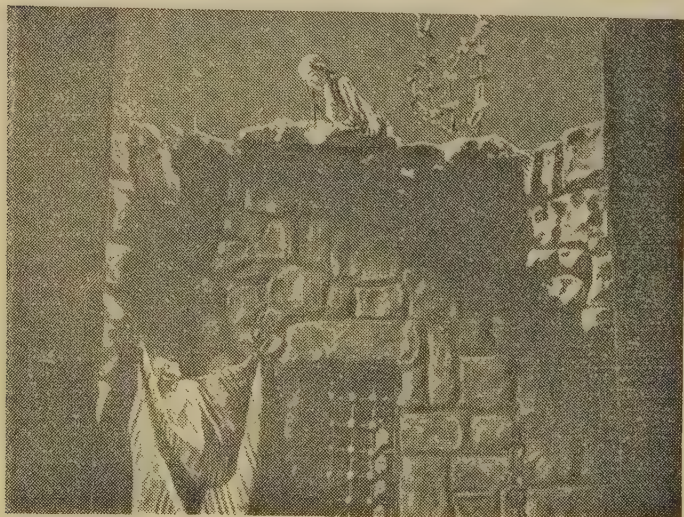
Ivan Zaitsev, one of the oldest Russian puppet show-men, who was awarded the distinguished title of Merited Artist of the Republic by the Soviet Government, died ten years ago. From the age of seven to 60, right until the Revolution, Zaitsev performed in show-booths. At fairs the day lasted from 6 a. m. to 1 a. m., with sometimes 20 performances a day, only four or five actors playing in them.

Zaitsev was a Jack-of-all-trades. He was conjurer and sword-swallower. He was acrobat, dancer and ventriloquist, who knew how to operate puppets and marionettes, mechanical and speaking dolls. In all these various modes of his art he displayed remarkable talent. But only towards the end of his life did he enjoy well-merited recognition. He was one of the first to join Obratzov when the latter organized his theatre, and Zaitsev willingly passed on his rich experience to the younger generation of Soviet puppet players.

In the Soviet Union this ancient genre has revived and flourished. The place of the semi-literate, roaming show men has been taken by well-equipped, highly cultured theatres. At present, there are over 100 such theatres in the Soviet Union, in addition to the thousands of amateur shows in clubs, schools and Red Army units.

Shortly before the war, a festival of puppet theatres was held in Moscow. This was attended by over 250 actors who gave 32 performances in the Russian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Armenian, Georgian, Jewish, Byelorussian and Azerbaijanian languages. This summer the first post-war festival of these theatres will be held in the capital. It is interesting to note that Obratzov's pupils either direct or stage-manage over 40 of these theatres.

In the past the work of these theatres was always guided by old craft traditions. Those who achieved highest mastery jealously guarded their secrets from all rivals. In certain Western-European countries marriages were arranged between the children of the most outstanding showmen, who thus preserved the secrets of the "firms" from rivals. German puppet showmen of the 18th century pledged



Scene from ALADDIN
LAMP

solemnly in writing that they would "never commit to paper a line of their repertoire so that the manuscript might not come into hands that would steal their bread."

The multi-national family of Soviet actors and producers who have devoted themselves to the art of the puppet theatre exchange their experiences liberally. All of them are employees of state theatres and no one can "steal their bread". The state supports the theatres generously.

Obraztsov has succeeded in assembling and training a group of men and women, fervent enthusiasts of their calling, inventors and thinkers, producers, directors, actors and artists in whose skillful hands the puppets live and act like human beings.

The spectacle *Aladdin's Lamp* is, of course, the familiar story of our childhood from the *Arabian Nights*.

"This intricate fabric was woven in the far distant past, its vari-coloured threads have stretched all over the earth, covering it with a verbal carpet of enchanting beauty. . . ." wrote Maxim Gorky in his introduction to the Soviet de-luxe edition of the tales. Watching Obraztsov's *Aladdin* the playgoer is held spellbound by the vivid imagination, the colourful texture and, most amazing of all to those who regarded the puppet theatre sceptically, by the fine emotions of the heroes, men of ardent hearts and brilliant minds, who fight bravely and selflessly and who emerge victorious in the struggle against evil.

In this play the tender notes merge with the bold and daring, the comic with the heroic-romantic. The audience sees the beautiful golden palace; hunters mounted on fiery steeds gallop past the windows; daring Aladdin pits his strength against the cunning vizier and the sparks fly as the swords clash in single combat. Delightfully charming is the dance of the Princess Budour to the rhythmic accompaniment of the tambourine. Indeed these graceful, eager movements not only represent the fine aspects of the dance (the play of the shoulders, the tilt of the head) but also express the soul of Budour, her sincere heart and pure love.

The performance of *Mowgli* after Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books* lasts two hours. But these 120 minutes which pass like a flash for the audience were preceded by no less than 120 days of strenuous, anxious work on the part of the sculptors, artists, producers, actors and musicians, headed by Obraztsov. In the picturesque jungle scenes, in the vivid and life-like portrayals of the beasts, the theatre has succeeded in capturing the entire romance and poetry of the *Jungle Books*. Beginning with the first scene at the Council Rock where the Pack Council accepts the man's cub Mowgli, reared by Raksha the mother wolf, and ending with the pathetic scene when the 16-year-old youth leaves the jungle and returns to man, carrying with him undying love for the four-footed companions of his childhood, the audience watches the performance with bated breath.

Again and again spontaneous applause interrupts the action: when the black panther Bagheera leaps swiftly out from behind the

grey rocks to save Mowgli from the man-eating tiger, Shere-Khan; again when at the trumpet-call of the wild elephant Hathi the animals meet at the watering place at the time of the drought and when under the petrifying glare of the great python Kaa, weaving rhythmic circles in the dust, the monkeys are impelled helplessly towards the snake in the Dance of the Hunger of Kaa. And who can help smiling as the merry Bander-log begin to leap and play in the branches of the sun-flooded trees!

Obraztsov's *Mowgli* differs from the well-known film version by Alexander Korda, which begins with Mowgli's return to the kingdom of man. Obraztsov shows us the events preceding the boy's departure from the jungle, closing the book at the chapter where Mowgli parts with the wolf-pack and Mowgli the wolf becomes Mowgli the man.

The art of the puppet theatre is a flexible medium and that makes it possible to transmit not only the voices but also the language, feelings and psychology of the Kipling characters: in which the passions and habits of the beasts are wonderfully merged with human sentiments, humour and lyricism. In doing this the directors S. Obraztsov and V. Gromov, the artists B. Tuzlukov, who sketched the stage settings, V. Andrievich, who made the puppets, and the actors manipulating them, have all achieved remarkable results:

Obraztsov's actors play the roles of the beasts with absolute freedom, sincerity and understanding. In *Mowgli*, for example, the actor Samodur animates the puppet of the python Kaa. In the depths of the python's narrow jaw a tiny tongue flashes, the half-blind eyes of the snake seem to look above and beyond its companion with disdainful hauteur. What wounded vanity is expressed by that narrow head, set on the elongated neck, when Kaa hears that the Bander-log have dared to call him, the King of the Pythons, an "earth worm", or when in response to the appeal to "run as fast as your feet can move" after the offenders, the python answers shortly: "Feet or no feet, I can keep abreast of all the four."

The cast tease Samodur that he plays a double game with Mowgli: in the role of the tiger Shere-Khan he wants to rend the boy to pieces and again as the python Kaa he rescues Mowgli from dire peril.

True, in the latter role he requires three assistants, like himself invisible to the audience: the python is nearly four yards long and at the "crucial moments" he is animated by the eight hands of four actors.

In the skillful hands of Obraztsov's actors, through their intonations of speech, Kipling's beasts become living, plastic characters, typical, natural and poetical at one and the same time. Here we have the base traitor, the jackal Tabaqui (actor V. Walter) with his plaintive howl and cowardly, slinking hindquarters, a despicable and crafty beast, and Ikki, the porcupine, so touchingly concerned for Mowgli, and many, many others.

In training his actors, Obraztsov has refuted the old view that only actors who have failed to make good on the "real stage" can turn to puppet shows. Only genuine talent, en-



Scene from *MOWGLI*

riched by a fertile imagination, observant eye and the ability to convey even the slightest feature, gesture or intonation, can breathe a living soul into a puppet.

The *Mowgli* production is so built up that the entire story of the battle of Mowgli's four-footed friends against the bloodthirsty tiger and the cowardly jackal serves as a confirmation of the idea of truth, friendship and devotion; it is genuinely human if we can use this expression with regard to the characters of the *Jungle Books*.

Over 100 puppets appear in the *Mowgli* performance. At present Obraztsov is engaged on a new production—an eccentric, parodic galla-concert—in which over 500 puppets will take the stage, the dolls being of a new type, hitherto not presented. The “gypsy chorus” alone will consist of over 50 characters.

Obraztsov's theatre frequently amazes the audience by the luxury and phantasy of its productions. But when necessary, this same theatre can show great mobility and work under quite different conditions. This was the case during the war when the theatre's troupe was divided up into several groups which performed for Red Army units at the front. At the beginning of the war a German bomb wrecked the theatre's premises. Upon this the personnel and properties boarded a small motor vessel, and travelled down the Moskva River and then along five rivers as far as Astrakhan. Performances were given at wharves, in towns and villages en route and in winter when the rivers froze, the company disembarked, took up quarters in a train and travelled thousands of miles overland, performing in more than 60 cities, visiting the steppes of Kazakhstan, the coal fields of the Kuzbas and the new industrial regions in the Urals and Siberia.

Many of the theatre's actors including Obraztsov himself frequently visited the front. During his stay in Siberia Obraztsov organized a school where soldier actors were given a course of training and one day 15 new puppet theatres left Novosibirsk with a troop train bound for the front. The actors were Red Army men who had learned the art of the speaking dolls in addition to the art of handling rifles and machine-guns.

A characteristic feature of Obraztsov's

talent is his inexhaustible fund of humour, sometimes resulting in an entirely unexpected interpretation of a certain character, switching the action from the romantic plane to that of delicate and clever irony.

Magic and phantasy are combined in these productions with faithful representations of every-day life, as a result of which magic becomes very true to life, as in the stories of Hans Andersen whose magic heroes wore torn slippers.

Amidst mysterious darkness the magic spirit of the jinnee appears out of an old bottle, sparkling in luminous paint. But this traditional magic effect fails to satisfy the exacting Obraztsov. The actor Ruban solemnly pronounces the words of the vow painfully memorized by the jinnee with such an air of bland composure that the audience immediately divines the character of this assiduous but far from talented magician.

A desert. A tiny oasis near a well. Making his way slowly through the brush, parting the leaves with his head, a lion appears. With a vacant stare, heavy and ponderous he takes in the audience and then proceeds leisurely to drink from the well, calmly sniffs at the air, yawns in melancholy fashion and returns to his lair. And the desert immediately assumes a surprisingly homelike appearance...

Obraztsov's productions are replete with countless similar colourful, witty episodes brilliantly presented. But the most important factor here is that Obraztsov and his assistant are inspired in all their ingenuity and resource by an underlying serious idea. If we attempt to analyze the leit-motif of the old Petrushka performances, we may express it in the word of the old proverb: “In Rome do as the Roman do”. Most of the old-time Petrushka shows were distinguished by the pathos of the ceaseless mockery of the strong over the weak, the cunning over the simple, the clever over the stupid.

At the present time, the old, hunchbacked Petrushka has found an honourable repose in a special corner in the museum of the Central Puppet Theatre. His place on the stage has been taken by new puppets. A new theatre has arisen from the ruins of the show booth. New ideas and feelings inspire the creative art of the Soviet puppet theatres.

Sergei Obraztsov is not only producer, artist, actor and singer, he is also a talented writer and publicist. His attention is held in the first place by ethical problems, and their pathos is the basic theme of his stage art. *The Songs of the Puppets* rendered by Obraztsov ridicule the trivial, petty-bourgeois morals, hypocrisy and covetousness, the substitutes of true feelings, sham love and sham culture. Problems of ethics form the basis of the puppet theatre's programme.

In an article entitled *About Kindness* Obraztsov writes about the supreme joy arising from an art which lauds beauty and true heroism, humanity and love. "Faith in mankind is the fundamental and distinctive feature in Soviet art." Seeking his heroes in the treasure-house of world literature, in Russian, French and Oriental fairy tales, in the books of Gogol, Kipling, Chekhov and Apuleius, creating new heroes, Obraztsov's theatre extols a kindly disposition, the majesty of truth, courage and friendship. This sermon of high morals has nothing in common with hypocritical moralizing and tiresome didactics. It inspires art with true passion and poetry, with the enthusiasm of esthetic seekings. And Obraztsov's productions express the poetry of his ideas.

The repertoire of the Soviet puppet theatre is rich and varied. Obraztsov himself has this to say about it: "Twenty-five years ago, the puppets were little more than a hobby with me. Today the puppet theatre is part of an integral whole, an equal member in the family of arts, with its own aims and tasks, its specific theatrical features, born of the

puppets' power of portrayal, their peculiar force of generalization. The puppets make an altogether exceptional impression, and possess the remarkable ability of being boundlessly lyrical and boundlessly comical. They are able to invest with life a popular fairy tale or a biting satirical pamphlet, and romantic lyricism and good humour, and laughter are as necessary to man as the air he breathes."

In his book *The Actor With the Puppet* published in 1938, Obraztsov wrote:

"I worked for 15 years on the 'human' stage and have worked the same number of years with the puppets, and now, leaving the 'human' stage I intend devoting myself solely to the puppet theatre. And not merely because I am interested in the puppets and believe in them, but because I know and clearly see the possibility of very great and interesting discoveries in the sphere of the puppet theatre which has many laws common to all theatres, possesses its own specific mode of expression, and has the common aim of all art. The guarantee that this aim can be realized I find in the impression the puppets make on the spectator, which I observe during performances for both children and for adults."

In introducing his performances, Obraztsov always makes the point that as yet his theatre is only on the threshold of the wonderful art to which he has devoted his life. He plans to stage Swift and Rabelais, Doret and Granville. The puppet theatre is marching forward towards grand, heroic-romantic productions.

SIMON DREIDEN

LITERATURE

A VISIT TO VSEVOLOD IVANOV

Thirty years ago a young typesetter from Kurgan, a town in the Urals, sent the manuscript of his first story to Maxim Gorky—friend of all young authors. Gorky replied with a letter full of helpful observations; he praised the story and advised the author to continue writing. This is how Vsevolod Ivanov, one of the more prominent Soviet writers, set out on his literary career.

Ivanov has dozens of letters from Gorky, who throughout remained his friend and severe critic. Numerous articles and essays describing his meetings with Gorky, together with the hitherto unpublished letters, are to appear in a book now being prepared by Ivanov.

Not long ago, Ivanov completed a novel *When Berlin Was Captured*.

"When I was war correspondent," says Ivanov, "I was not only an observer, but a direct participant in the battles. Together with the Red Army soldiers I marched through the Brandenburg province, took part in forcing the Oder and in the storming of Berlin. A few hours after the capture of the Reichstag bastion I was there and also in Hitler's Imperial Chancellery."

The hero of *When Berlin Was Captured* is Mikheev, a young artist. In his novel the author deals with the problem of an honest, realistic art and an artist devoted to his people, and of the struggle against conservatism in art. The novel unfolds a sweeping panorama of the events associated with the fall of Berlin, and reveals their inner significance.

Vsevolod Ivanov has also completed a book of stories of phantasy.

Here is what he says about his plans for the future.

"I have conceived a novel about post-war life in Moscow. I want to show the Soviet capital as a city of people concerned with thoughts about the future of the world."

A POET OF THE OSETIAN PEOPLE

The fortieth anniversary of the death of Kosta Khetagurov, founder of the fine literature and the literary language of the people of Osetia, was commemorated recently in Soviet literary circles.

The Osetian Military Highway runs through wild mountain canyons, passing through the Caucasian range to Southern Osetia. Here, in 1859, in the mountain hamlet of Nar, Kosta Khetagurov was born in a clay hut. As a boy of five he tended sheep on mountain slopes and at night listened to the howl of jackals that prowled on the outskirts of the village....

At the age of fourteen Kosta Khetagurov

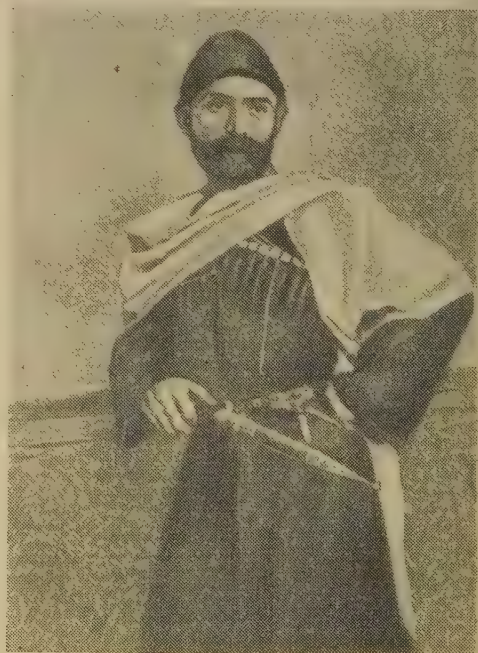
entered the high school in Stavropol. Here he wrote his first poems and painted in watercolours and oil.

He knew by heart the works of Pushkin and Lermontov. Upon being expelled from the high school for "atheism" the young Osetian travelled to Petersburg, where he enrolled in the Academy of Arts. But the withdrawal of his scholarship prevented him from graduating the Academy. Returning to his native land, Kosta Khetagurov rallied around himself the intelligentsia of Osetia. His poems were copied out by hand and passed from one to another. He established the first Osetian publishing house, and a theatre. At the same time he wrote a drama.

Soon, Khetagurov drew upon himself the attention of the local authorities, who first banned the publication of his poems, and then exiled him for five years beyond the confines of Osetia. In exile, Khetagurov contracted tuberculosis and died in 1906 in a village which now bears his name.

Kosta Khetagurov is the national bard of the Osetian people. His first book *The Osetian Lyre* published in 1899 was immediately confiscated by the police, but his poems lived on, being transmitted from mouth to mouth.

During the long winter nights the inhabitants of the mountain auls (mountain villages) would gather around the fireside in cottage.



Kosta Khetagurov

homes to listen to readings of Khetagurov's poems. His songs were sung at folk festivals and many of them have become household words in Osetia. Khetagurov was a man endowed with versatile gifts; he was both poet and prose writer, playwright and producer, painter and musician, publicist and orator.

TO THE MEMORY OF SVATOPLUK ČECH

A century has elapsed since the birth of the celebrated Czech writer and patriot Svatopluk Čech.

Čech's books, such as *Morning Songs* and *The Songs of a Slave* are well known, while a series of stories in verse *In the Shade of the Lime Tree* brilliantly depict the life of his day in Czechia. Svatopluk Čech visited almost all the countries of Europe, and travelled widely in Russia. Many of his poems deal with the friendship between the Russian and Czech peoples.

At a memorial meeting in honour of Svatopluk Čech, held under the auspices of the literary section of the Society for Cultural Relations of the U.S.S.R. with Foreign Countries (V.O.K.S.), Professor V. Picheta read an interesting paper on the life and work of the writer. Brief addresses were delivered by J. O. Horak, the Czech Ambassador in Moscow and by the Soviet writer Leonid Sobolev.

PUSHKIN RECITALS

Much interest, especially among young people, has been aroused by the weekly "Pushkin recitals" now a feature of literary life in Moscow. Each Sunday crowds of university and high school students fill the Chaikovsky concert hall to attend lectures by Professors Blagoi, Grossman and other authorities on Pushkin. Subjects dealt with so far include Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin's dramaturgy, Pushkin lyrics, the influence of Russian folklore on Pushkin's poetry, etc.

"Pushkin recitals" are accompanied by concerts with stars of the capital's concert halls taking part. An idea of the popularity of the recitals can be had from the fact that over ten thousand people attended the first seven lectures.

A PUSHKIN DICTIONARY

At the end of the last century students of Pushkin conceived the idea of compiling a dictionary of Pushkin's poetic vocabulary.

In 1908 Professor S. A. Vengerov began work on the dictionary, but never succeeded beyond the initial steps.

After the Pushkin centenary in 1937, the Academy of Sciences undertook the preparation of the Pushkin dictionary and entrusted the work to the Institute of the Russian Language. According to Professor Vinokur, who is supervising the compilation, "the dictionary will serve as a guide to the Pushkin text. We have set ourselves the aim of analyzing every word, in all cases when it was mentioned by Pushkin, in all its shades of mean-

ing, and in combination with other words. The dictionary will be invaluable not only to philologists and students of literature. It will be useful to teachers, writers, journalists and all people interested in cultural pursuits. The first phase of our work—registration of Pushkin's words—is nearing completion. We have prepared 217 thousand index cards. Our aim is to compile a dictionary, which in richness of material and detailed analysis will compare with the very best works of the same type published in Europe—dictionaries devoted to the vocabulary of Shakespeare, of Moliere and Dante."

A LECTURE ON DOSTOYEVSKY

A large audience attended a lecture by Professor Nikolai Belchikov, dedicated to the memory of Dostoyevsky, who died 65 year ago.

The lecturer traced the evolution of the main idea in Dostoyevsky's works between the forties and the seventies of the past century, and analyzing the contradictory trends typical of Dostoyevsky, stressed the significance of the writer's literary legacy for Russian literature.

Professor Belchikov quoted many interesting observations by Dostoyevsky. For example, foreseeing Russia's role in the struggle with the stagnant ideology of misanthropy, Dostoyevsky wrote: "We were the first to announce to the world that we intend to secure our own well-being not through the oppression of other nations; on the contrary, we see our own well-being in free and independent development of other nations and in fraternal union with them."

IN THE WRITERS' CLUB

An interesting event in the literary life of the capital was the recent visit to Moscow by a group of Leningrad poets. So keen was the public interest in the visit that the large hall of the Writers' Club was unable to hold all those eager to hear the Leningrad poets.

Pavel Antokolsky, the well-known poet, who presided, extended hearty greetings to the guests on behalf of their Moscow colleagues.

Antokolsky was followed by the poetess Olga Bergholz who recited her poem dedicated to the stoicism of the people of Leningrad during the siege.

Olga Bergholz who lived in Leningrad throughout the siege, visited the troops in the field, and read her poems to the soldiers. Her daily broadcasts over the Leningrad radio always filled the hearts of hungry and frozen people with faith and courage. During those terrible days she lost her husband, but her voice still sounded as a symbol of the calm but unbreakable spirit of the city. The poem describing the sufferings and privations of the long siege made a deep impression on the audience.

The poets A. Prokofyev, V. Rozhdestvensky, N. Braun, P. Dudin and A. Akhmatova were warmly applauded.

Anna Akhmatova was once a poetess of a single theme—the theme of unrequited

love. Akhmatova is a great master in the genre of chamber poetry. She read selections from her wartime poems. As might be expected the impact of war took her out of her former one theme circle. In her latest poems Akhmatova deals with problems of a philosophical nature, new for her—life and death, labour and creative endeavour, etc.

This was the first post-war visit to Moscow by Leningrad writers as a group.

In connection with the forthcoming 800th anniversary of the founding of Moscow, the memoirs section of the Writers' Club is holding a series of evenings dedicated to the past of the capital. At one of the gatherings the veteran writer Nikolai Teleshov, friend of Anton Chekhov, read extracts from his memoirs *The Moscow That Was*. Pictures of old Moscow, with its merchants and officialdom came to life before the audience. The writer gave a colourful word picture of the old-time Punch and Judy shows, the fairs, and carnivals.

Teleshov told his audience about Moscow's notorious "Hitrovka"—vividly described in Gorky's *Lower Depths*—a sanctuary for down and outs, where together with thieves and beggars, many talented people, down on their luck, were forced to spend their days. One of these was the painter Savrasov, whose picture *The Rooks Have Come* always attracts the attention of visitors at the Tretyakov Gallery.

A DISCUSSION ON JACK LONDON'S WORKS

An essay on Jack London's works, written by Roman Samarin, served recently as the subject of discussion by the West-European Literature Department of the Institute of World Literature. Samarin's monograph will be part of a large many-volumed work *A History of American Literature*, which is being compiled by the Anglo-American Department of the Institute.

Jack London's work dates from that period in the development of the American literature, when, having shed its restricted outlook, while preserving all its particular features, it merged into the universal flow of world literature,

Dealing briefly with those periods in the writer's life which seriously influenced the moulding of his outlook, Roman Samarin analyzed in detail London's career as a writer. He divided the work of Jack London into three phases: to the first phase belong the animal stories and tales of the North, extolling strength, energy and the human will.

This early phase is the period of Jack London the individualist, when his heroes are tough, fighting men. The second, more mature period, connected with a much deeper understanding of class struggle and a turn towards socialism, brought from his pen such works as *Martin Eden* and *The Iron Heel*.

In the third phase Jack London, in Samarin's view, experienced a crisis of ideas. He returns to themes of the North and to animal stories, but, interprets them differently, counterposing a healthy life among the elements to the strenuous struggle and the

corrupting influence of the bourgeois urban life.

Jack London's books enjoy immense popularity among Soviet readers and R. Samarin's interesting essay stimulated a lively debate which contributed useful criticism to the author.

NEW TRANSLATIONS

Evenings devoted to discussions of books translated by Soviet translators organized by the Central Club of Art Workers, have proved very popular. Ilya Ehrenburg who in addition to his writing finds time for translation spoke at one of the evenings about his translations and notes to the poems of François Villon, the French poet.

At another evening, Sergei Shervinsky read his translations of poets of ancient Rome. Catullus, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid.

A new translation of Lope de Vega's comedy *The Star of Sevilla* was read by M. Zamaikhovskaya.

One of the gatherings was devoted to Assyrian fairy tales translated by A. Brindarov.

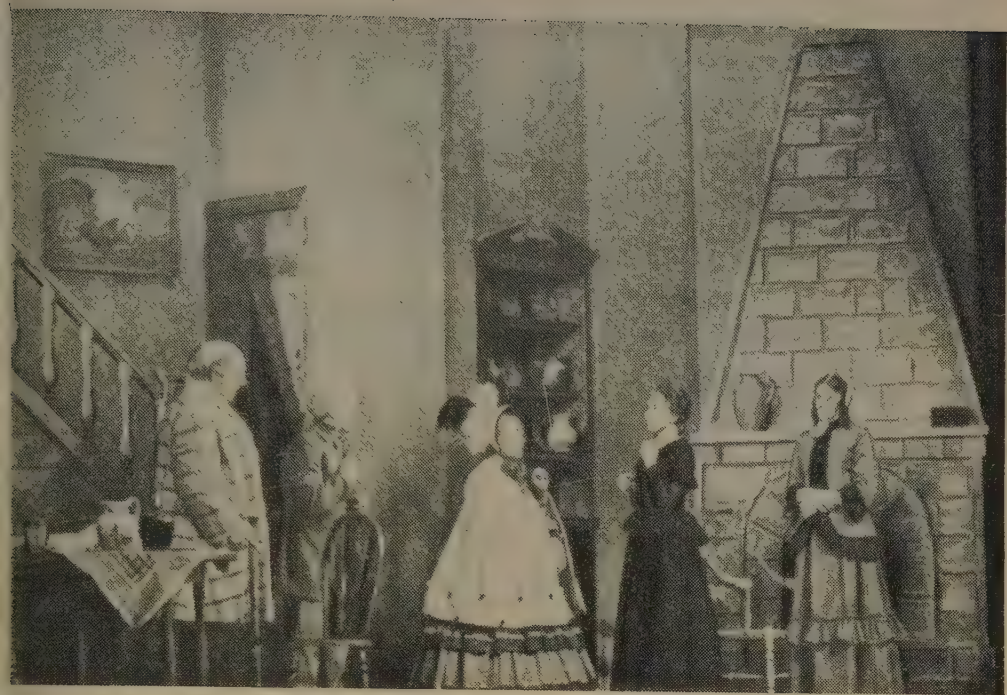
THEATRE

DICKENS ON THE RUSSIAN STAGE

Since the time in 1838, more than a hundred years ago, when the first Russian translation of Pickwick papers appeared in the magazine *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (Homeland Notes) Charles Dickens has remained a constant companion of the Russian reader. Russians are attracted to Dickens' works by the optimism, faith in man, warmth of heart and brilliancy of humour. These features are typical of *Our Mutual Friend* a stage version of which is now running at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre in Moscow. Selecting from the long chain of events and characters the essential links of the subject, writer Natal Venkster gave them a histrionic form resulting in a highly interesting play, which preserves all the charm of the original.

The producer Ivan Bersen'yev proved to be fine and clever interpreter of Dickens. The typical Dickensian flavour emanates from the pictures of old England. The spectacle is taken along the fog-enshrouded embankment, crosses the threshold of the *Six Jolly Fellowship Porters* tavern, meets charming Bella Wilfer together with young Jol Harmon, and is involved in the intricate plot of the "golden dustman" Mr. Boffin whose aim is to make Bella see life's true value.

The players act their parts in commendable fashion. As portrayed by actor V. Marut old Boffin seems to have just walked out of the novel. I. Murzayeva and V. Vsevolod successfully cope with the parts of the Wilfers—one of the contrasts of connubial couples, so beloved by Dickens. The part of Bella is played in turn by two young actresses Valentina Serova and Elena Fadeyeva. Serova's Bella is more modern, caustic, temperamental, Fadeyeva's—more gentle and lyrical; her impersonation reminds one of old English etchings.



Scene from *OUR MUTUAL FRIEND*

UNCLE VANYA PRODUCED IN LENINGRAD

In one of his note-books Anton Chekhov left the following lines: "If you are going to work merely for the present, your work will be insignificant: in working one should have the future in mind. . . ."

The urge for the future is characteristic of many Chekhov's works, including his play *Uncle Vanya*. In *Uncle Vanya* Chekhov speaks not only of the monotonous and dull provincial life in Russia of the end of the past century—he conveys the idea of another, different life and his profound belief in this life is clearly reflected in the play. . . . The author's idea is expressed by one of the characters, doctor Astrov, whose hobby is forestry: "When I hear the trees of my young forest, planted by my own hands, rustling in the wind, I feel that the climate is to some extent in my power, and that if a thousand years hence the people will be happy, this will be in slight measure due to my action. . . ."

Almost half a century has elapsed since Chekhov's play first appeared on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre with the participation of Constantine Stanislavsky, Olga Knipper-Chekhova, Vassili Luzhsky. . . . Since then it has been constantly in the repertory of Russian theatres. This year *Uncle Vanya* was staged in Leningrad by the Pushkin Drama Theatre.

The players and the stage-manager Leonid Vivien have succeeded in presenting the play as a vivid tale about genuinely good people who suffer because they want to get above their grey and meagre surroundings. J. Tolu-

beyev, as Uncle Vanya, reveals himself as a master of deep, psychological characterization. Uncle Vanya, a gifted man, has spent his life uselessly and the realization of this results in a psychological drama which is conveyed by the actor with fine expressiveness. In his day, Stanislavsky used to play the part of doctor Astrov: in the Leningrad performance it is taken by Nikolai Simonov, who plays the title role in the film *Peter the Great*. Simonov portrays a man easily infatuated, impulsive, a dreamer, though no longer a youth. . . . He scored a great success and the Leningrad spectators hailed the appearance of a Chekhov play on the Leningrad stage.

FARKHAD AND SHIRINE

One of the "younger" Moscow theatres—the Operatic and Dramatic Studio founded by Stanislavsky—has put on the play *Farkhad and Shirine* by the Azerbaijani poet and playwright Samed Vurgun.

Vurgun finds the sources of his inspiration in traditional Azerbaijan folklore. In *Farkhad and Shirine*, one of the most poetic legends, an Azerbaijan *Romeo and Juliet* comes to life.

The story begins with the love of the young builder Farkhad for the beautiful Shirine, both of whom live in the mountains of ancient Azerbaijan. They are both young and beautiful and pure of heart. They have known each other since childhood and perhaps Shirine still sees in Farkhad the barefoot boy and subconsciously dreams of another hero—a terrifying and strong knight. . . . The Shah of Iran, Khosrov, becomes enamoured of Shirine's beauty and ravishes her.

Enclosed in the golden cage of the shah's palace, Shirine learns the value of true love: the image of Farkhad possesses her heart. Farkhad declares war on the Shah, who, fearing defeat, swears that he will liberate Shirine, if Farkhad will undertake to hew an outlet to the sea through the rocks. Farkhad, on wings of love, sets to work on this Herculean task. Alarming news penetrates to the Shah's palace. The work which it was believed would require decades is nearing completion! Whereupon Farkhad's enemies resort to a cruel plot. On the day Farkhad completes his unprecedented labour, and floods of light pour through the break in the rocks, he receives false news of Shirine's death. Driven to despair, Farkhad kills himself. Confronted with her lover's corpse, Shirine stabs herself with a dagger. Thus the Azerbaijan Romeo and Juliet sever their lives. . . .

The stage production of the Azerbaijan legend is the work of the young producer Juri Malkovsky in collaboration with Mikhail Kedrov—belonging to the Stanislavsky school, and now in charge of the studio. The picturesque and poetic performance by the young cast of the theatre, breathes of folklore. The music is by the venerable Soviet composer Reinhold Glière, connoisseur of Oriental folk music.

EUGENE ONEGIN ON THE KAZAKH STAGE

An outstanding event in art life in Kazakhstan is the staging of Chaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin* by the Kazakh State Opera House in Alma-Ata. Pushkin's poem, on which the opera is based, is known to Kazakh people from excerpts translated at the end of the last century by Abai Kunanbayev, the national bard of Kazakhstan, who was a fervent Pushkin enthusiast.

The Kazakh poet was particularly taken with Tatyana's letter to Onegin to which he composed a melody in keeping with the traditional Kazakh style. This song won great popularity and Pushkin's Tatyana immediately became a Kazakh heroine.

To this day the song is sung by shepherds on the hillsides, by the nomad camel drivers on the rolling Kazakh plains and it is a favourite in the collective farm clubs. The song paved the way for the success which greeted the opera. News travels swiftly over the Kazakh countryside and when it became known that the Alma-Ata Opera House had added *Eugene Onegin* to its repertoire the management were inundated with request bookings from villages near and far. To meet the demand, special performances were reserved for collective farmer audiences.

Produced in the Kazakh language, the opera confronted the singers with many difficulties. They had to accommodate themselves to music and settings altogether different from Kazakh styles; they had to convey the charm of Chaikovsky's music, and the world of the Russian landlords of a century ago. A masterly translation of the text was made by the young Kazakh

poet, N. Baimukhammedov. The performers sing in their own Kazakh language, while Chaikovsky's music has not suffered even the slightest change.

As Tatyana, Kuliash Baiseitova, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., known as the "Kazakh nightingale", is the chief attraction of this production. She conveys the suffering of Pushkin's heroine in a truthful and earnest manner.

WHOM TIME OBEYS

. . . A blacked-out city. A belated and importunate client Captain Martynov, is knocking at the door of a hair-dressing salon. One of the barbers lets him in. The officer, exuberant and loquacious, announces that he will fly shortly on an important mission. He flirts with a fair damsel, working in the salon and succeeds in getting himself invited to a party. Martynov gets tipsy at the party and later discovers that his brief-case containing confidential documents is missing. The hair-dressing salon is a trap. The spy who runs it insinuates that Martynov can save his life by flying over to the Germans. The pilot, fearing the consequences of his careless action, agrees.

Later we see Martynov in the office of a general, heading a branch of Soviet intelligence. Martynov reports to the general the details of the "party". The documents of course, were "a plant"—Martynov never intended flying anywhere. His "careless" behaviour was a ruse to trap the spy.

The unfolding of the action keeps the audience in a state of delayed tension. Martynov is commissioned to fly over to the Germans, win their confidence and help the guerrillas operating behind the lines to carry out the execution of the Gauleiter Rogge, who is behaving with frightful brutality.

We see Martynov in Rogge's chancery. Rogge who is probing Martynov suddenly orders him to be taken out and shot. But Martynov is a cool customer. Maybe the gauleiter's decision is just a manoeuvre. So, with the calm assurance of a brave man and a capable intelligence officer Martynov maintains his pose and convinces the gauleiter. He cancels the order to shoot and starts talking with Martynov about his future duties.

One more trial awaits Martynov. In the gauleiter's chancery he suddenly comes face to face with his fiancée, the gauleiter stenographer. Unknown to Martynov, Varya Kalugina was instructed by the guerrillas to take on secretarial work in the gauleiter's office.

Trying hard to overcome her emotions Varya tells the guerrillas the truth about Martynov. Now the guerrillas are checking up on him. Convinced that he is a traitor the guerrillas plan Martynov's removal and just as they are about to execute the plan their leader appears on the scene with last-minute information that Martynov is the envoy sent to them from Moscow.

Martynov kills the gauleiter, finishing the job started by the old watchmaker R

binstein, planted on Rogge by the guerrillas under the pretext of repairing a rare clock. The watchmaker put an infernal machine in the clock, but did not succeed in carrying out the explosion. This is done by Martynov, who risks being blown up together with the gauleiter.

At the moment when the Soviet intelligence learns about the destruction of Rogge and Martynov's "death", the hero himself turns up. Immediately after the explosion the guerrillas guide him through the enemy lines. He arrives in Moscow where he meets his fiancée Varya.

Such is the plot of *Whom Time Obeys* by the brothers Tur and L. Sheinin, staged in the Vakhtangov Theatre by Alexandra Remizova. This, incidentally, is one of the first experiments with a detective story on the Soviet stage. Martynov's role is performed by Andrei Abrikosov, well-known to the Soviet audience from the films *Party Ticket*, *The Great Turning-Point*, etc. Mikhail Rappoport as the Jewish watchmaker gives a lyrical impersonation of the old man, who even in the ghetto enjoys music, and who, bereaved of all his relatives, still harbours a warm love for life.

The settings are the work of Nikolai Akinov, whose décor is rich in imagination and original in conception. For instance, the wide open windows on the second floor of a house on the Riga coast enabled the stage-manager to introduce a scene, which according to the text of the play takes place backstage: the girl, convinced that the man she loves is a traitor, sends him into her own room, where he is to be killed. Through the open windows the spec-

tators watch with anxiety for the outcome of this dramatic episode.

A brief scene, but an important part of the plot, is very successfully done. A large salon car, with hood down, is shown on the stage. A general and his aide are sitting in the car. The star-sprinkled sky which is running to meet them, the swaying of the car and the rapid tempo of the music create an exact illusion of a car in motion.

The music written by Urbach contributes in no small measure to the success of the performance. At times tragic, then frivolous and lyrical, the music is closely interwoven with the subject matter of the play and the producer's staging of it.

A PLAY ABOUT GUERRILLAS

Young Man is the title of a new play staged by the Central Theatre of Transport which is fast becoming one of the more popular playhouses in Moscow. Written by George Mdivani and Alexander Kirov it deals with the life of the guerrillas who fought fearlessly behind the German lines and is based on the life story of Constantine Zaslunov, who won renown as a guerrilla leader in Byelorussia.

The play opens with the appearance of a young engineer Gorbachev in a town occupied by the Germans. Gorbachev declares his willingness to collaborate with the Germans and until the very middle of the play the audience is puzzled. What is Gorbachev—patriot or traitor? The play is built on a game between two opponents—Gorbachev and the Gestapo chief Ritz, who mistrusts



Scene from *WHOM TIME OBEYS*. Act IV

Gorbachev and tries to catch him. In the second half of the play the mystery is unravelled. Gorbachev is obviously „Falcon”, chief of a guerrilla detachment, engaged on an important mission, connected with an explosion at a vital railway junction.

Gorbachev kills a locomotive engineer who is an enemy agent sent to him by Ritz allegedly with a message from „Falcon”. This scene, and also that when Gorbachev discloses his identity to the girl guerrilla whom he loves, and finally, the scene which follows the murder of Gorbachev's mother by Ritz—are dramatic and powerful episodes.

The acting of A. Krasnopolsky as Gorbachev, deserves high praise. Krasnopolsky is convincing as a guerrilla, and equally so in those scenes where he is obliged to play the intricate and delicate game of pretending to be a Russian traitor.

Krasnopolsky likewise does very well in the emotional scenes. The vow taken over the body of his mother—to avenge her death sounds as a prophecy.

The murderer Ritz—acted by G. Spassky—outwardly the perfect gentleman, in fact a strong and implacable enemy, meets with defeat in combat with Gorbachev.

The Transport Theatre specializes in plays on contemporary themes. Nikolai Petrov, Transport's chief producer, well known as actor and producer in Leningrad's theatre-land, is in his element when tackling plays posing problems, and enjoys resolving subjects taken from actual life.

MUSIC

THE CHOPIN CONCERTS

Between the works of Chopin, the immortal Polish composer, and the Russian music world there are long and intimate bonds. Glinka, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, and many other Russian composers highly appreciated Chopin's music.

That the standard of performance of Chopin receives very close attention in Russia is borne out by the numerous successes of young Soviet pianists at international Chopin competitions. The voice of the Polish composer is always heard in Soviet concert halls and over the radio, and his works occupy a prominent place in the curriculum of Soviet music schools and conservatories.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the „Chopin cycle” of concerts, which included all the composer's creations, has proved so popular with Moscow audiences. The first concert of the cycle was given by the pianists Yuri Bryushkov and Alexander Jocheles—both of whom competed in international Chopin contests in Warsaw. Pianist Yuri Bryushkov said: „The works of Chopin, one of the outstanding representatives of Slav musical culture, enjoy immense popularity in the Soviet Union. In 1927 Lev Oborin, Dmitri Shostakovich, Grigori Ginzburg and myself took part in the Chopin international competition held in Warsaw. At this, the first serious examination for us, young Soviet pianists, we didn't do so badly. Lev Oborin carried off the hon-

ours while the rest of us were awarded prizes and diplomas.”

Of the sixteen pianists taking part in the Moscow „Chopin Cycle”, six are winners of three international competitions: Yuri Bryushkov, Tatiana Goldfarb, Igor Aptekarev, Teodor Gutman, Nina Emelyanova, Alexander Jocheles. All their concerts attracted a full house.

NEW SCORE BY DMITRI KABALEVSKY

Dmitri Kabalevsky's new work—his second quartet has had its first performance in Moscow. In its breadth of theme and unity of composition this quartet resembles a large-scale symphony. The musical language of the quartet is lively, flexible and exact—it is free of the narrow confines of „academicism”, and is altogether typical of the modern trends in Soviet music. The composer has also completed 24 piano preludes based on Russian folk themes. At the first public concert, these preludes were played by the pianist Yakov Flière.

NEW RUSSIAN CHOIR MUSIC

During the war, a kappella choir under the well-known Kapellmeister Alexander Stepanov, was organized in Moscow. Latest additions to this choir's repertoire cover a hundred songs include recent compositions by Maryan Koval, composer of the operas *Yemelyan Pugachev* and *Sevastopol's Heroes*. His *Tyutchev Cycle* in which five poems by the 19th century Russian poet Fyodor Tyutchev have been set to music in a masterly style, proved of great interest. Koval has succeeded in creating fresh music: images to the poet's lyrics full of delightful intimacy and philosophical musing.

Koval's prelude *In Memoriam*, dedicated to the Red Army dead is also attracting great interest.

CINEMA

YOUNG MUSICIANS

This film opens with a view of the Moscow Conservatory—its concert hall, billboard containing the names of musicians known throughout the country. They, however, have not become stars overnight. The concert successes were preceded by years of hard work, diligent study from very childhood.

The camera next takes us behind the conservatory's facade into a quiet Moscow side-street which houses the Central Music School. The film records a day in the life of the school. It begins in the hall where the future musicians helped by grown-ups are hanging up their coats. Then they enter into their classrooms. During a solfège exercise a teacher plays Glinka's *Chernomarch*. The pupils gravely beat time to the minims, quavers and semi-quavers.

Next follows a singing lesson. The children stand around a grand-piano, which in comparison with the little pupils seems gigantic... The film also shows the piano, cello and violin classes. The teach-



Still from the film
HELLO, MOSCOW!

in this school include such prominent Soviet musicians as Alexander Goldenweiser, Heinrich Neygaus, Vissarion Shebalin, Vassili Shirinsky and Vera Dulova.

The musical background of the film is combined with interesting details about the pupils among whom are Igor Mamin-Sibiryak, grandson of the well-known Russian writer of the beginning of the 20th century; the tiny Tavrid Garmayev, who came to Moscow from the far-away Buriat-Mongolia to study music; a Czech boy Miroslav Rusin-Shebl, whose father, a talented cellist, died from a fascist bullet.

The authors of the script Lev Arnstam and Joseph Jusovsky and the director Vera Stroyeva have made a lively film which acquaints the spectators with an interesting page in Soviet culture.

HELLO, MOSCOW!

This new film, released by the Mosfilm studios, is built on the traditional lines of a chronicle. It is a film-concert, taken during last year's amateur art festival by the pupils of trade schools held at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

Youngsters studying in these trade schools which train skilled workers for industry, devote their leisure to art. The most talented children were selected for the national festival which is reproduced in the film *Hello, Moscow!* However, it is not merely a concert film. An interesting story which runs throughout gives an opportunity to show the lives of the pupils and their school. A story of an accordion is woven into the subject of the film. An old foreman preserves an accordion in memory of a friend who perished in 1905. While the old man lies sick the accordion is lost. A pupil, Kolya Leonidov, known as an inveterate accordion player, is suspected of theft. An involved skein of dramatic circumstances ensues, but it transpires eventually that the accordion was hired out by the old man's granddaughter, because he needed more nourishing food. But the man to whom she hired

the accordion absconded with it and put bricks into the case. In the end things are cleared up, the accordion is found, the old foreman presents it to Oleg, a pupil of the school. Oleg comes to Moscow with the accordion and takes part in the concert.

The charm of the film lies in the fact that the main actors are not professionals but pupils of the schools. Their acting is simple and unrestrained.

The professional actors taking part in the film are B. Tenin, as the writer, N. Lubimov, director of the school, and S. Philippov, the accordion player who "stole" the instrument.

The film was produced by Sergei Yutkevich, who directed the well-known films *Golden Hills*, *The Man With a Gun*, *Yakov Sverdlov*. The script is by Mikhail Volpin and Nikolai Erdman, authors of the script *Jolly Fellows*. The excellent shots of the concert are by the film operator Mikhail Magidson.

TAJIKISTAN

The life of Soviet Tajikistan, which has developed and prospered in the last quarter of a century, serves as the subject of a newsreel *Tajikistan*.

The film shows Tajik horsemen galloping along narrow mountain tracks. Military decorations glisten on their chests. These are Tajik cavalymen, returning victorious from distant Germany. The local people toast their heroes at huge festive tables, set in a straight line under the bright blue sky. The warriors have returned to peaceful labour. At every step they see how here, far behind the lines, their families have also performed feats of labour, how they fought and conquered. Wheat fields climb up the mountain slopes. Caravans of camels carry sacks of golden grain. Before the war Tajikistan consumed grain brought in from other parts of the country. However, by the second year of war the republic was not only satisfying its own needs, but was supplying grain to neighbouring republics.

During the same difficult war years the collective farmers built the Grand Guissar Canal, which irrigates thousands of acres now planted with cotton.

Cotton growing is the main occupation in Tajikistan and the camera shows us mountains of sparkling-white cotton awaiting shipment to the cotton mills.

The camera takes us to the collective-farm orchards, to the vineyards, lead and wolfram mines, oil wells, and coal mines. And high up in the alpine meadows are great flocks of sheep.

The Pamirs... the roof of the world. High ranges, covered by eternal snow. Groups of geologists scale the almost vertical slopes. Explosions are heard by the audience. Rock is being dynamited for the construction at an altitude of 13 thousand feet of the Stalina-bad-Khorog highway, which will be the highest automobile road in the world.

Such is Soviet Tajikistan today, as it is recorded on the screen.

ARTS

IGOR GRABAR

Academician Igor Grabar, prominent Soviet painter and scientist, is seventy-five. His talent and decades of hard work have resulted in a masterly technique.

In his autobiography the artist tells of his meeting with Chaikovsky, an important event for his future. The great composer said to the youth enthusiastic about art: "Inspiration is born only out of labour and in the process of labour."

In the early nineties of the past century the first paintings by Grabar appeared at exhibition. The fine gift of the young artist immediately attracted attention. As early as 1901 his painting *Sun ray* was purchased by the Tretyakov Gallery. His paintings *February Azure*, *Snow in March* and *Rooks' Nests* also brought Igor Grabar wide recognition.

The artist felt the charm of Russian nature with a particular fervour upon returning from abroad, where he had finished his education after a period in the Petersburg Academy of Arts spent in Ilya Repin's studio.

"It was a lovely evening," writes Grabar in his reminiscences, "an excellent view opened up from the terrace to a hilly country, ending in a woodland background. We were sitting silent, bewitched by the beauty of the landscape. Tears were in my eyes because I was so deeply, so happily moved. Here it is, the real Russia, thought I..."

In his work Grabar is guided by a deep appreciation of nature, but he sets before himself the aims of a new pictorial expression of his surroundings. He is inspired by the task of conveying the first emotional impression, the purity and contrast of shades, the richness of colourful "nuances." Starting out from the traditions of Russian national art, he continues and develops those trends in landscape painting first traced by his predecessors.

Portrait painting occupies a prominent



Academician Igor Grabar in his workshop

place in the artist's work. Grabar is the author of numerous portraits of statesmen, scientists, people prominent in art and literature. He also painted the large popular compositions, such as *Lenin at the Telegraph Tape*, and *Lenin and Peasant Delegates*.

Grabar combines his painting with scientific work. He is the author of *The History of Russian Art* (5 volumes) and has written articles on Repin and artists of the old Russia, Andrei Rublev and Pheophan Grek. Grabar's social activities comprise an important chapter in his biography. In 1913 he was elected curator of the Tretyakov Art Gallery and remained at this post till 1925. He now heads the Central Restoration Workshops, which have preserved and discovered for Russia many ancient canvases.

From the very first days after the Revolution, Grabar has actively participated in the protection of monuments of artistic and historical value. He has done particularly important work in this field during the war. Igor Grabar also heads the History of Arts Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.

EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS OF MOSCOW

The Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. is publishing several special editions for the eight hundredth anniversary of Moscow which is due next April. A collection entitled *The Architecture of Moscow of the 16th and 17th Centuries* will contain new studies of the architectural monuments of that period. In preparation are a book about the St. Basil's Cathedral, constructed during the reign of Ivan Grozny, an album *Moscow Past and Present*, and a scientific survey of Moscow's ancient charts.

A special compilation entitled *Architectural Archives* will include previously unpublished maps, documents and blueprints connected with the construction of Moscow.

AMERICAN ART IN MOSCOW

An exhibition of American art, organized by the Society for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries has been opened in the Moscow Architects' Club. Original paintings and reproductions, photographs of American sculpture, paintings and stage settings occupy four rooms of the Architects' Club.

American paintings show a large variety of subjects. Together with landscapes, portraits and interiors, we see pictures on industrial, social and genre themes. Such are *Open Hearth* by H. Gottlieb, *Men Out of Work*, *After Work* and *Mother and Child* by Rafael Soyer. Many of the pictures deal with Negro life. Works by Francis Watkins, Moses Soyer, Max Weber, George Biddle and other American artists are also on view.

The work of American sculptors attracted a great deal of attention. There are shown reproductions of *A Woman in Bronze* by Robert Russin, *Mother and Child*, a wood carving by John Hovannes, *Head of a Woman* in black Belgian marble by Marion Walton, *Destitute* by Maurice Glickman done in marble and others.

A lively interest was taken in the sculptures by Hugo Robus *Girl Washing Her Hair* and *Woman Combing Her Hair*.

Theatre art is represented by photographs

of productions of the Guild Theatre. Together with scenes from *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Idiot's Delight*, *Othello*, *R.U.R.* by Karel Capek and O'Neil's comedy *Marco Polo's Travels in the Orient*, etc., there are photographs giving an idea of the foundation of the theatre and its activity.

Both Soviet artists and public displayed keen interest in the exhibition which drew large crowds to the club.

APPLIED ARTS IN THE U.S.S.R.

The halls of the Oriental Museum in Moscow have been given over to an exhibition of national decorative and applied arts. The entire range of artistic culture of Soviet peoples is represented here, from the finest Russian embroideries to the gaily-coloured Kirghiz "koshmas", the light sails of Chukotka "karabas" boats, skilful bone carvings, and the riot of colour on the Russian clay hand-painted toys.

In the centre of a large hall there is a stand in the shape of a turret. This contains various vessels and household utensils in bright colours with a fine gold design painted at Khokhloma. They look very picturesque against the background of white tablecloths and lace curtains.

A special hall is devoted to the work of the renowned Palekh craftsmen. Various kinds of boxes, small chests, and inkpots made of black lacquer papier-maché are on view. They "bear" pictures based on subjects from Russian fairy tales and from various Krylov fables, episodes from Nekrasov's poem *Who Lives Well in Russia*, and scenes from Russia's past history and the World War II.

One Palekh box of a peculiar nine-facet shape, is particularly interesting—each facet depicts the various phases of the recent war.

The display from the Ukraine and Lithuania includes an abundance of embroideries and ceramics. Oriental rugs please the eye by their choice colours and many have portraits woven into them. An Armenian rug, for instance, bears a portrait of Karl Marx; a Georgian rug portrays the national bard of Georgia, Shota Rust'veli, while a rug from Azerbaijan shows a portrait of the poet Firdausi.

The exhibition shows the wealth of colour and craftsmanship which distinguish the folk art of the U.S.S.R.

MISCELLANEOUS

SOVIET WOMEN SPEAK

What are you working on at present, and what are your future plans? We addressed this question to Soviet women, prominent in art and literature. Below are some of the replies:

Marietta Shaginyan, *writer*.

Look at the bill-boards in Moscow: they announce lectures on most diverse subjects, politics, atomic energy, literature, history, arts, etc., and they always collect a full



Exhibition of Decorative and Applied Arts. Ceramics stand in the Skopinsk folk art section.

house! A passionate desire for knowledge, for "mind travel" into the unexplored is evident among the Soviet public. The job of literature is to satisfy this urge. The *Young Guards* publishing house has conceived an interesting series of books entitled *Our Motherland*. Each republic will have a special volume.



Agnia Barto, children's author.

I write a great deal for the radio. When, together with the actress



Rina Zelenaya, we planned a series of broadcasts for children *The Clever Crocodile*. I frankly never dreamt that children would send us hundreds of letters in response.

The Clever Crocodile has two assistants—the Bear and the Magpie. They have yet another friend—the Parrot. He knows 3,333 funny stories and

speaks in all languages.

The stories teach juvenile listeners how to be polite and respectful to their elders and to one another, to take care of the tiny tots, to speak correctly. But all this is done not in the form of dull lecturing, but in merry miniature scenes and songs.

We are of course delighted that this new entertainment has proved so successful.

Two new books of my verse, *Bird Song*, and *The First Class* have been printed recently. I have just completed a children's almanac *Seesaw*, and I am now engaged on a book about a little girl Mashenka.

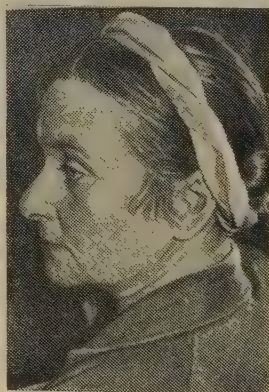
Sophia Giatsintova, actress and stage manager.

I am now staging a play *Forest Song* by the late Ukrainian writer Lessya Ukrainka. It is a poetical composition extolling Truth, Beauty, Kindness—everything finest in human nature.



acters and the philosophic ideas of the play.

Sara Lebedeva, sculptress.



Irina Maslennikova, singer.



Although it's not at all easy to adapt a fairy tale for the theatre, it is exciting work. I want to show the enchanted forest and its woodland inhabitants in a very simple style, without crowding our small stage with heavy décor. I shall endeavour to convey the fine artistic character

I am working on a sculptural portrait of Captain Gastello, War Hero. Gastello, as you know, crashed his burning plane onto a German panzer column and I am deeply interested in the character of the brave pilot.

My next big work is a monument to Anton Chekhov, which is to be erected in Moscow.

The spring of 1946 marked three years of my work in the Bolshoi Theatre—the best Opera House in the country. During this period I sang five operatic roles. I made my debut as Gilda in *Rigoletto*.

At present my entire thoughts are occupied with a new in-

teresting part, that of Manon in Massenet's opera, a concert version of which will be performed at the Conservatory. Together with Sergei Lemeshev, who sings the part of Chevalier de-Grioux, I shall sing several arias, and take part in scenes from this opera. The role of Manon Lescaut, so contradictory and complex, contains wonderful melodies which are full of exciting possibilities for a soloist.

ARMENIA'S BOOK TREASURE

The State Public Library in Erevan with its two million volumes is the largest in Armenia. The shelves contain many rare and unique editions; the first Armenian printed book *Parzatomar* (a calendar), published in 1512 in Venice, and *Urbatagiri* (a book about witchcraft and superstitions) dating back to 1513.

Copies of Christopher Columbus' diary deserve particular attention. Miniature and giant volumes are most interesting. A miniature Al-Koran, no bigger than a sugar cube, looks microscopical alongside a sixteen-pound Bible. The voluminous archives of the library are of considerable scientific value.

BOOKS OF ANCIENT LITHUANIA

The Lenin Library in Moscow has presented to the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences manuscripts and books which were removed to Moscow for safe-keeping when the Germans threatened Vilnius. Among the documents there are parchment scrolls of Lithuanian princes of the 15th-18th centuries, Papal bulls, and guild statutes of the 15th century. This material is of great interest for the study of the life and culture of the Lithuanian people. Besides 842 scrolls the Lithuanian Academy received 473 manuscript books of the 11th-19th centuries, written in Russian and Latin. Particularly valuable is a New Testament of the 11th century, a Slav grammar of the 17th century, and also 828 volumes of archives relating to the 17th-19th centuries.

Professor Ziuzhgda, vice-president of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, who accepted the documents on behalf of the Academy, said: "We are immeasurably grateful to the directors of the Lenin Library and through them to the great Russian people for safeguarding this historical material which is of paramount value to us. The transfer of these archives to the Lithuanian Academy is one more evidence of the mutual friendship between the Russian and Lithuanian peoples."

AN ANIMAL TAMER

Ivan Ruban, twenty-six-year-old animal tamer is one of the heroes of Moscow's very popular circus. Ruban's "company" consists of a lion, two lionesses, six brown bears and two dogs.

The animals perform complicated and spectacular tricks, which involve no little risk on the part of the trainer. Ruban bravely places his head into the lion's open jaws. Surrounded by the beasts, he stretches out on a wooden platform and closes his eyes. He remains in this posture with closed eyes while a lioness approaches, pauses for a few minutes at his head and then leaps over his body. Placing a fragment of raw meat in his mouth, the tamer calls for the lion "Vagai", who very carefully extracts the meat. Needless to say the audience watch this performance with bated breath. . . .

Ivan Ruban hails from a village in Sibe-



Ivan Ruban with his trained bear

ria. While still a lad he dreamt of becoming a tamer and, for the absence of bigger game, "trained" roosters, hens, dogs, pigs. At his orders the rooster crowed, danced and, harnessed to a tiny carriage, trotted off with hens for passengers.

Upon leaving school Ruban got a job as pit boy in Siberia. After saving a little money, he bought several bear cubs and started training them. He knew absolutely nothing about methods of training animals, nor of their behaviour—he was assisted merely by his inborn gift, by his vocation as animal trainer.

Later he got a job in a circus menagerie, where he tended animals and was soon allowed to start work as a tamer. At last the long-awaited day came, and he appeared for the first time on the sawdust ring. His "debut" had an instantaneous success. He was showered with congratulations among which was a telegram from his former miner friends.

Ruban and his animals are old friends. They are accustomed to one another, but this does not prevent them from frequent quarrels. The lion "Vagai" is a most capricious beast. Once "Vagai" flattened his trainer with a stroke of a paw. As he was falling Ruban saw how two figures dashed at the lion. These were his dogs—a Danish hound and a collie, his faithful friends and helpers. They distracted "Vagai's" attention for a couple of seconds and thus gave the trainer time to get clear.

The animals are greatly attached to their educator, especially "Potap", the huge bear.

According to the programme "Potap" comes to the trainer and takes his arm. This has become a habit with the bear so much so that he is often seen walking arm in arm with his master near the menagerie. This habit led to an amusing incident. While on tour in Siberia, the bear broke the iron rails of his cage, got out and went for a solo stroll. On the street "Potap" encountered an old lady and hooking her arm, started dragging her along. The old lady in speechless terror, stumbled helplessly along with her "cavalier". Fortunately, "Potap's" escape was discovered, and his trainer came to the rescue.

At a recent circus competition, Ivan Ruban's animals scored a great success.

ALPINE SPORT IN THE SUMMER OF 1946

Demobilized from the Red Army, Soviet alpine enthusiasts are getting ready for the first post-war climbing season. The 1946 programme is considerably handicapped by the fact that the Alpine bases and training camps in the North Caucasus suffered severely during the German occupation.

Three camps, however, were refitted last year, while another ten will provide training facilities for five thousand mountain climbers this season.

Mountain climbing is gaining in popularity in the Soviet Union.

An alpine department has been created at the school for instructors run by the Physical Culture and Sports Council while the Tbilisi Physical Culture Institute provides six months' courses for instructors.

This season's programme includes a repetition of the more difficult ascents made during the pre-war years, as for instance the scaling of Shkhedy, one of the most difficult ascents in the Caucasus. This peak was scaled only once in 1940 simultaneously by two groups. Prior to that time not a single group of Soviet or foreign alpinists succeeded in reaching the summit of this forbidding mountain.

No less difficult is the eastern ascent of Mount Uzhba (15,409 feet) from the direction of the Guli Glacier, and the western ascent from the Uzhba Glacier over the pass.

Only two successful ascents by way of the first route are recorded; one by the British alpinist Cockin in 1888, and the other in 1945 by a group of Soviet alpinists headed by E. M. Abalakov. An ascent by the second route was done in 1935.

Record ascents also include the scaling

of the second highest peak in the Caucasus Dykh-Tau (17,054 feet), climbing the Bezengi wall, which includes six peaks, two of which exceed 16,000 feet; Mount Skhara (17,038 feet), situated along the northern ridge has been climbed but once—in 1930 by the Czech alpinists Tomashek and Muller; Koshtan-Tau (17,096 feet) and Mount Tekhtingen (14,000 feet) which likewise have only once been climbed, will also be tackled this year by Soviet alpine enthusiasts. In the Western Caucasus the Djuguturlyuchat range with its five peaks will be the object of record-breaking ascents. Having an absolute height of about 14,000 feet this rocky mass is a formidable proposition for the alpinist. In the entire history of alpinism it has been scaled but once (by Abalakov's group in 1944). Extremely steep, precipitous slopes, in places quite vertical, and sharp, indented ridges make its summits well nigh inaccessible. A group of Moscow mountain climbers is training for this ascent.

Plans are also in hand for climbing the peaks in the Pamirs and the Tien-Shan mountains. Leading alpinists will tackle the Victory Peak in Tien-Shan range. The Victory Peak is over 23,500 feet high, just a little lower than the Stalin Peak which is the highest mountain in the U.S.S.R.

Among those taking part in this expedition are A. A. Letavet, who has made a close study of the Tien-Shan range, E. M. Abalakov, who made history by scaling the Stalin Peak, N. A. Gusak and E. A. Beletsky, who also made the Stalin Peak ascent, and other alpine climbers holding the "Master of Sports" title. The expedition aims not merely at an ascent of the Victory Peak, but also a study of the entire range.

A research expedition operating in the southwestern spurs of the Pamirs will study the best approach to one of the highest and as yet unscaled peaks of the Soviet Union.

The success of these expeditions will determine the passing on to more difficult ascents, such as for instance the first assault in the history of alpinism on the Peak K-2 (Godwin Austen) in the Himalayas, (28,250 feet), the second highest in the world. It is interesting to note that while numerous attempts have been made, not a single peak above 26,000 feet has yet been conquered by alpinists. Mount Everest (29,002 feet), Peak K-2 (Godwin Austen) (28,250 feet), Kanchenjunga (28,146 feet), Nanga-Parbat (26,620 feet) and other 26,000 and 28,000 feet peaks, were attacked many times, but none of these attempts was ever successful.

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